DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

FROM PRESSURE TO PERFORMANCE

A Practical Guide to Building Confidence Before Examinations

Written by: Ms. Pooja Jadoun
Designation: Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology



Examinations are approaching, and with them come familiar experiences: incomplete syllabi, long study hours, difficulty concentrating, fear of forgetting answers and constant worry about results. Many students sit with books for hours but struggle to remember what they have studied. The answer is not simply to study for longer. It is to study strategically and manage your mind along with your syllabus.

1. Follow the 30–5 study cycle

Choose one small task, such as learning two theories or revising one topic. Study with full attention for 30 minutes, then take a 5-minute break. After three rounds, take a longer break of 15–20 minutes. Keep your phone out of reach during each session. A clear, achievable target is more useful than writing “study all day” in your timetable.

2. Set only three targets for the day

Each morning, write down three specific tasks—for example: (i) complete two topics from Chapter 3; (ii) revise yesterday’s notes; and (iii) practise five short-answer questions. Tick each task when it is done. If a task is too large, divide it into smaller steps. Do not punish yourself with an unrealistic timetable; adjust it and begin again.

3. Test yourself instead of only rereading

After reading a topic, close the book and explain it aloud in your own words. Then write down the main points from memory and check what you missed. For example, after studying a definition, try writing it without looking at the page. This active-recall method helps you identify what you actually know and what needs more revision.

4. Use a short calming routine when anxiety rises

Pause, place both feet on the floor and relax your shoulders. Breathe in gently for 4 counts and breathe out slowly for 6 counts. Repeat for about one minute, without forcing or holding your breath. Then choose one small next action: read a page, solve one question or revise one definition. The aim is not to remove every feeling of nervousness, but to settle yourself enough to continue.

5. Keep comparison out of your study routine

If a friend says they have completed the whole syllabus, do not immediately assume that you are unprepared. Ask yourself: “What is the next useful task I can complete?” Replace “I cannot do this” with “I can work on one part at a time.” Compare your present effort with your own earlier progress, not with someone else’s pace.

6. Make a one-page revision sheet for each unit

On a separate page, note key terms, headings, important dates or formulas, diagrams and questions you often forget. Keep the sheet brief enough to revise in five to ten minutes. Use it for quick review, but return to your textbook or class notes whenever you need the full explanation.

7. Protect sleep and take care of your body

Set a realistic bedtime and aim for 7–9 hours of sleep. Keep your phone away for 20–30 minutes before sleeping. Drink water, eat regular meals and take a short walk or stretch between study sessions. Avoid replacing sleep with an all-night study session; tiredness can make attention and recall harder.

8. Have a simple plan for the examination hall

Before writing, take a moment to settle and read the instructions carefully. Scan the paper and plan your time according to the marks. Start with a question you know well if the instructions allow it. If your mind goes blank, pause, take two or three slow breaths, jot down any related keywords and move to the next question. Return to the difficult question later, leaving time to review your answers.

A REMINDER TO TAKE INTO THE EXAM HALL

“I do not have to do everything at once. I will take one step at a time, trust my preparation and give my best.”

A FINAL WORD

Dear students, examinations matter, but they do not define your intelligence, worth or entire future. Prepare consistently, ask for help when you need it, and treat yourself with patience. If anxiety becomes overwhelming or begins to interfere seriously with daily life, speak with a trusted teacher, counsellor or mental-health professional. Prepare with discipline, appear with confidence and remember that your well-being matters as much as your academic achievement.

Department of Psychology
Mahatma Gandhi P.G. College, Firozabad