

The No Worries Exam Prep Package



1. Stop making excuses and sleep.

- The performance difference on an intelligence test due one hour's difference sleep is bigger than than the performance difference between a normal 4th grader and a normal sixth grader. **Losing one hour of sleep over 3 days is equivalent to 2 years of cognitive ability.**
- A survey of 7000 high school students revealed that A students averaged 15 minutes more of sleep than B students, who averaged 15 minutes more of sleep than C students.
- It is very difficult, if not impossible, to make up chronic sleep debt by “sleeping in” on weekends.

Teenagers need an average of 9–1/4 hours of sleep each night. This is the single most important thing you can do to increase your learning and exam grade.

2. Study in 25 minute blocks followed 5 minute breaks.

- Get a kitchen timer. Set it for 25 minutes, and during that time, **focus** on studying only for a single class. You can focus this long—it's less than the time for episode of the *Simpsons*. Remember that your willpower is an unlimited resource.
- During your 25 minute study session—eliminate all distractions. Put your phone out of reach, turn off your music, and stay away from the computer unless it is absolutely essential for your work.
- During study sessions, focus on actively solving problems and questions that test and build your understanding. Don't mindlessly read your notes or textbook; use these resources only when you are stuck.
- Focus on solving problems from scratch. There is no better way to test and build your understanding than trying to solve problem with a blank sheet of paper from scratch.
- During your five minute breaks, do whatever you want.

3. Plan your schedule precisely for the next three weeks.

- Your goal should be to plan every half hour of your day for the next two weeks. This is what coaches do when preparing their teams for bowl games, its what great athletes do when preparing for the Olympics, and it's what great actors do when preparing for movies.

- You can use the attached weekly calendar to divide your day up 30 minute chunks to help your planning.
- This does not mean that every second of your day must be spent studying, on the contrary, you should build in time for fun, exercise and relaxation.

4. Build exercise and downtime into your schedule.

- Research shows that “sustained physical activity improves learning and grades in academic subjects more than actually using that time for the academic subjects themselves.”
- Exercise and downtime, along with sleep, are the keys to giving your brain the rest and time it needs to synthesize all you are learning.

5. Make studying fun.

- Find cool, exotic places to study that will keep you focused and engaged in your efforts. Some suggestions:
 - The stone chapel on campus.
 - The High Museum of Art (Free admission to Fulton County Residents on Dec 4).
 - Local college campuses (so many awesome places to study here).
 - The Carter Center (Why not study for your political science class in a model of the oval office?)
 - Atlanta Botanical Gardens (studying in the tropical orchid house on a chilly day is like paradise).
 - The top floor of an office building
 - The Varsity (a frosted orange is the perfect study break).
 - A local park.
 - Your public library.
 - Tons of other recommendations on Yelp (search for study).
- If your friends can stick to your 25-minutes of deep focus routine, study with them. Quiz each other on important concepts—check each other’s work.

6. Check in with your coaches (teachers)

- Show your study plan to your teachers. Get their feedback.
- If you’re stuck on a problem or a question, check in with your teacher to get hints.
- Ask your teacher what s/he thinks is the best way to prepare for the exam.
- Remember, establishing strong relationships with your teacher is the key to learning and long term happiness in school.