

EXERCISE – THE KEY TO EXAM SUCCESS

For most students during the exam period, any hope of regular exercise goes out of the window. In its place falls lengthy revision sessions and high-stress levels.

Although you may feel like you should be spending every waking hour preparing for your tests, the truth is that if you really want to fulfil your potential (from both an academic and health perspective) you might want to dig those gym shorts back out of the wardrobe...

THE BIG BENEFITS OF EXAM-TIME TRAINING

You've no doubt heard about the numerous physical health benefits of regular exercise, but have you ever stopped to think how it could influence your mental performance?

When you engage in movement), it triggers the release of various hormones and chemical compounds in the body.

SOME OF THE MOST NOTABLE INCLUDE:

- Serotonin – involved in regulating your sleep cycles and boosting your mood.
- Dopamine – positively influences learning and your attention span.
- Norepinephrine – affects motivation and mental stimulation.

Coupled with an increased blood flow to the brain, this cocktail of hormones and neurotransmitters improves cognitive function and the ability to focus for longer time periods, meaning higher quality revision sessions, and a higher chance of hitting your target grades.

FITTING EXERCISE INTO YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE

It's all well and good knowing about the potential benefits of exercising during exam time, but that still doesn't solve the problem of fitting it into your busy schedule.

1. To start with, it's important to be flexible. Fit your exercise around your revision timetable, and find what works for you.
2. For some, an early morning session increases their focus for the rest of the day. For others, a lunchtime workout helps to break up the monotony, or an evening exercise class helps them to de-stress before bed.
3. Remember that exercise doesn't have to last for hours to count. During your revision period, you might benefit from moving towards shorter, more intense sessions like tabata intervals or circuit training. You still get all the important physical and cognitive benefits, just in less time.
4. You can also stay fresh throughout the rest of the day by taking regular movement breaks from your work, every half an hour or so. Whether it's a short walk around the campus or a few stretches in the library, do what you can to stay active.

TIME TO DO THE WORK

Hopefully, now you're convinced that staying mobile and getting a sweat on during the exam period is a must. Just remember that what you eat can have just as much of an impact on your mental performance. Aim for plenty of nutrient dense fruits and veggies, and omega-3 rich nuts and seeds for an even bigger brain boost. **How will you be keeping fit amongst your revision?**

