



How to Study for Your Exams

Hi Everyone,

When you have to write an exam you might ask yourself many questions:

- 1) **How do I make time to study?**
- 2) **What should I do to prepare properly?**
- 3) **What should I do during my exam to do better?**

Here I'm going to answer the above questions, so you can write your exams with confidence and know that you are fully prepared.

1) Making or Finding Time to Study

You need to make time to study... **everyday. Yes.** It really is the best way to prepare for an exam (and improve your English for life!)

A short period of time everyday is much more effective than 3 hours on a Saturday. Why? Think about this.

How do you lose weight? You need to exercise regularly (3-4 times a week for an hour) and it is the same for learning English. **Do this and you will notice that you recall words faster (and more easily), that your fluency will improve and your enjoyment will also increase as well.**

Ok. So that is my first suggestion but some of you might be thinking:

It is impossible for me to study everyday. What can I do?

First of all, I don't *really* believe you. (Sorry) Everyone has time in the day that they are not using efficiently.

So here are some ways to buy more time:

- 1) **Study English while in the bathroom.** Yes. Keep your grammar/vocabulary books in the bathroom so that when "nature calls" you can review your materials. Everyone has to go to the bathroom so take a seat and be productive. J

- 2) **Review your vocabulary or grammar during your commute to work.** If you use the metro, bus or any other form of public transportation to get to work or to get around the city then you have a lot of time that can be dedicated to English.
Just bring your vocabulary or grammar books along for the ride.
(Most people in Madrid have at least a 30 minute commute to work...so that is an hour a day!)

- 3) **Just do it!** Make the time. Consider it an appointment with yourself, for 30 minutes. If you want to improve you have to work. Period. J

2) How to Prepare for an Exam Properly

You already know that you need to study on a regular basis (**everyday**) but there is something else. It is one thing to "know something" and another to actually be able to **use** and **apply** concepts.

Many of my students tell me that they understand the grammar; they just have difficulty applying it correctly in an exam. Sadly this does not surprise me. Why not? ... because **students do not study properly. (Shocking... I know!)**

Answer the following question.

How do you study? What do you "do" when you are studying?

You might say that you **review the grammar**, or **read through the vocabulary** or that you **make notes** from your text, but to be honest, this isn't good enough.

Yes, it might help you a little, but it is not going to help you a lot and it certainly isn't going to help you use English at work or when you travel (isn't that the real point!!)

The problem that I see, over and over again, is that students read the "manual" for English, and understand how the grammar functions but they never seem to **take it for a test drive**.

It's like buying a car and only reading the brochure. Don't you want to take English for a spin!! So, to make a long story short, **you need to DO what you are going to do in the exam when you study**.

If you must translate texts in the exam...**translate texts when you study**.

If you must identify mistakes in the exam...**identify mistakes at home**.

If you must fill in the blanks in the exam... (you guessed it!) **do fill in the blanks exercises**.

The point of learning English is to use English.

Here are some specific activities for my online masters students.

Grammar Exam

-Use the grammar translation lists (cover/hide the English part and translate).

-Use those sentences and some from the blue "Grammar in Use" book to make questions from statements and answers from questions.

Vocabulary Exam

- Use the lists to translate (Spanish – English and English – Spanish).

- Write sentences using the words, in context. The sentences should clearly demonstrate what the word means. For example how to define "frisk".

Not a good example: You can be frisked at the airport.

Good example: When you pass through security at the airport you might get frisked. It is uncomfortable being frisked, as a stranger must pass their hands over your body to ensure that you are not carrying any weapons.

Business Writing

-Just do what you need to do on the exam. Translate letters and texts from your course book. **Do this everyday.**

-Try to find mistakes in writing. You can do this by looking at your own emails that you have already written (which will help you see your common mistakes).

-Write freeform letters to yourself or to others. Practice is KEY!

3) During your exam...how to do better?

Here are some tips and suggestions to be more productive when you actually write your exams.

- 1) Relax.** Most of the time people get nervous and stressed right before or during an exam and this causes you to make mistakes.
- 2) Read the questions carefully.** They will help you or provide you with additional information so make sure to read them and understand what you need to do.
- 3) Do the easy sections first!** I would suggest doing simple fill in the blank and sentence comparison exercises first. This will allow you to relax and know you have lots of time to do the more challenging sections (such as translations and finding the mistakes).
- 4) Watch the time!** Make sure that you divide up your time evenly and don't spend too much on one section. If you control your time you will be able to finish all the sections and allow yourself time to review your work.
- 5) Don't change your answer unless you are entirely sure.** Most of the time your first answer is correct and you end up changing it to an incorrect one. If you are not sure...don't change anything.

That's it. Good luck on your exams everyone!

Cheers,



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