

How to Pass Exams, **Easily**

By Michael Carroll
NLP Master Trainer

Are you the type of person that relishes the challenge an exam brings, or does the very word 'test' send you into a frenzy of worry? Many intelligent people simply freeze in exam situations and information that was readily available to the mind before the exam is suddenly locked away. In this article, I will outline easy to use NLP tools that, when adopted, will take the stress out of exams, making it easy to pass.

As human beings we face our first tests at a very young age. Tasks like singing a song in front of relatives, performing the new dance manoeuvre in front of Mummy and Daddy and simple arithmetic and spelling tests are examples of early tests. Some children thrive on showing everyone how good they are and as a consequence grow older with a positive association to tests and exams. Others feel embarrassment, perhaps are ridiculed and end up with a negative association to tests.

From the associations formed with early tests, we create generalisations that either support us in exam conditions or bring us out in a cold sweat. We create mental filters that mediate our experience, so in the present day state we run mental programmes as a result of the filtering of internal and external stimuli. The output will be exam anxiety or exam confidence (or perhaps somewhere in the middle) depending on the individual. Generally, anxiety and studying for exams do not go well together. However, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) a low level of anxiety, combined with focus and heightened awareness are components of a 'flow' state. However high levels of anxiety while revising or taking the test itself severely limits recall and flow of information

I would suggest an overall strategy for

passing exams that includes being aware of the bigger goal, visualising success, creating an optimal learning state, planning study and being a smart reviser. In the paragraphs below I will outline each step.



Get in touch with the big picture

For many, exams are an aggravation that consume time and cause stress. This style of thinking causes you to mentally limit yourself on the hassles of the exam and preparation work. It's better to think at a much higher level, and that is about what happens once you pass the exam. In the last issue of Rapport Magazine, I wrote about the goal beyond

the goal. Start to think about the benefits of passing the exam and what you can do with the qualification. Visualise the goal beyond the goal in the steps below to create some excitement and momentum.

Create a positive future history (visualise success)

Many people experience exam anxiety because they mentally picture the struggles they will experience with the exam and in some cases people imagine themselves failing and then wonder why they experience anxiety! You will reverse this process; you will create strong representations of passing, and set up in your circuitry what the legendary Muhammad Ali used to call a 'future history'.

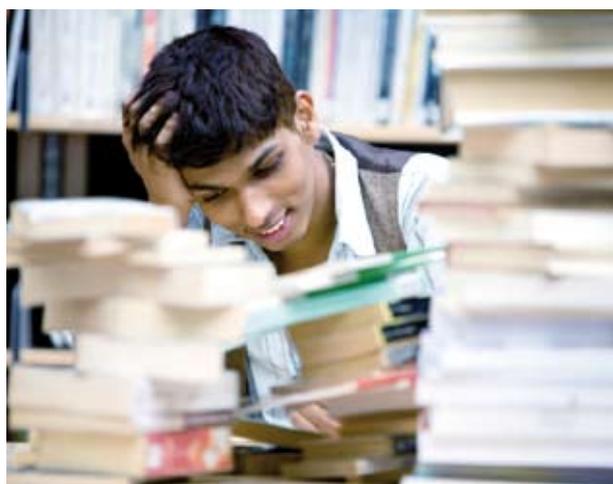
Before you begin the revision process, get in your head what you are capable of doing here, and that is passing the exam. A visualisation process is helpful for this. Access your relaxed and open state (see paragraph below) and let your eyes close. Now create a movie or play in front of you. You are the star of this play, you are centre stage. The scene you are creating ahead shows you, in all your glory, having passed the exam. Notice all the qualities present in passing this exam. Now get a sense as you step into the scene, you see the world around you at the time of passing the exam you feel the feelings linked to passing. You are a success, you have passed.

Now become the director of the movie.

Mentally step back out of the experience and make any changes to the scene that will make it even more appealing and wind the clock forward so you can also see the goal beyond the goal, the benefits of passing this exam.

Create an optimal learning state

In NLP and particularly New Code NLP 'state' is a leverage point for altering behaviour. As I



said, the state of anxiety causes mental blocks and is therefore not conducive for recalling information. The optimal state for recall and learning seems to include the qualities of relaxation, openness, and alertness. Here is a process to help you access an optimal state for revising and sitting the exam itself. It's best if you sit in a comfortable chair, with both feet on the floor and with your hands resting gently in your lap.

Take lots of breaks; Research has shown that time frames between 30 minutes to 45 minutes are optimal session for peak concentration

Focus attention by looking at spot ahead of you, perhaps on the wall.

Adjust your breathing. Breathe in through your nose, hold, and exhale slowly through your mouth. The in/out breath ratio should be 1:2, meaning your out breath is twice as long as your in breath.

Access peripheral vision. As you hold your attention on the spot on the wall, expand your visual awareness so that you are simultaneously aware of the area one metre either side of the spot while still being aware of the spot. Do this by expanding your visual attention without moving your eyes. Now expand your visual awareness further so you are simultaneously aware of two metres either side of the spot while still being aware of the spot. Then expand your awareness so you are visually aware of everything ahead of you.

(Optional) Focus your attention on the space

twelve inches from the crown on your head, as if you are wearing a wizard's hat (while remaining in peripheral vision). Learning researchers have discovered that holding your attention behind you on a fixed space helps to hold attention and increase recall. See PhotoReading (Scheele 2007) and Gift of Dyslexia (Davis 1997).

Use this state or similar for revision, learning, and taking the exam.

Plan your study

Review all the material that is on the syllabus and likely to be in the exam. Chunk the material into topics and themes and create a revision timetable. If you have multiple exams, this is an important task to ensure you give sufficient times to key topics and subjects. When you are revising a subject or topic within the subject, stay on topic giving it your full attention, rather than drifting randomly through material.

Be a smart reviser

You know how you learn and remember best, use what has worked for you. Below are some smart revision tips:

Take lots of breaks; Research has shown that time frames between 30 minutes to 45 minutes are optimal session for peak concentration. Longer sessions and your mind wanders.

Use another part of your mind in the break, do a physical activity or mediation, so that you return to your studies refreshed.

Use music, (if it helps you learn). Research has shown the rhythm of rock music and classical music helps people access an accelerated learning state.

Take non-linear revision notes. Use lots of colours, symbols and acronyms. Mind maps, spider diagrams and shape charts are all useful. Use big sheets of paper. I suggest A1 poster size, for use as below:

Decorate your bedroom with your posters; Take your Mind Maps (or other form of non linear notes) and stick them on your bedroom walls. Just as you tuck up in bed, review one poster. Close your eyes and picture it in your mind. When you wake up, picture it before you look at it. The next night repeat the process with another poster AND the one

you did previously. So you can re-create your bedroom posters in your mind before the exam. Some people find linkage and association useful, including in the visualisation the other items in your bedroom and associating the items.

Engage all the senses. Dance, sing, act, shout, do whatever you have to absorb the information at a deep level.

All of the processes in this article are easy to implement with no formal NLP training. To really capture peak states of performance for exam passing, I would encourage people to learn New Code NLP and PhotoReading. New Code NLP has a series of games and principles designed to maximise unconscious performance. PhotoReading is a system developed to use the whole mind for reading and assimilating the written word at amazingly fast speeds with heightened recall. Combining these two methodologies for exam passing gets excellent results.

I would encourage every learner to follow the simple steps here to make exam passing easy. Be aware of the goal beyond the goal, create a positive future history, create a useful learning state, plan your study and be a smart reviser. Adapt the processes in this article to suit how you learn best. Enjoy passing those exams. ●

Michael Carroll

Founder and Course Director, NLP Academy
www.nlpacademy.co.uk

About the author

Michael Carroll is the founder and course director of the NLP Academy and co-founder with John Grinder and Carmen Bostic St Clair of the International Trainers Academy of NLP. He is the only NLP Master Trainer in the world certified by John Grinder and Carmen Bostic St Clair and he continues to work closely with them in developing New Code NLP processes and streamlining the classic code patterns.

References

Csikszentmihalyi M (1990). *The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York, Harper Collins

Scheele, P. (2007). *PhotoReading*, Minneapolis, Learning Strategies Corporation

Davis, R and Braun, E.M (1997) *The Gift of Dyslexia: Why Some of the Brightest People Can't Read and How They Can Learn*. Perigee Books