

# EXAM PREP 101

*Do you want to know how to stop procrastinating? Well, for starters, stop reading blogs and articles about how to stop procrastinating. Enough is enough. You need to get your head down and focus on your preparation for the upcoming exams – be it admission tests, end-of-term exams or board exams. This. Is. It. Here are a few tips that might spur you on to be more aware of the consequences of procrastinating.*

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## 1. LOCK YOURSELVES IN

The world outside is your arch nemesis during exam preparation. With shopping malls and food courts calling out your name, trying to convince you to spend about six hours outdoors, putting yourself under house arrest is a good option to avert temptation.

Make yourself a deal: if you finish at least two chapters from each subject within the week, reward yourself a week-end off. Incentives help a lot with focusing on getting things done. Soon enough you'll find yourself working hard for that coveted day off.

## 2. BE SOCIALLY IMPAIRED

The first thing you must do to succeed in this fight is to throw your phone far away beyond your vision. That toxic little device is the mother of all distractions, even though we don't want to admit it. "I'm not addicted/ I've only been playing Clash of Clans for two hours/ I'll get things done, no big deal!" Yeah, right. Hide away all your guilty pleasures – guitar, books, video games, EVERYTHING. The human mind is wired strangely; you tell yourself, "I really need to get started on this", skim through the pages and wonder, "WHAT IS THIS?!", feel stressed and have the urge to log on Facebook. "I'll get started soon, but I can afford five minutes just checking my notifications." But that never happens – "just checking my notifications" turns to hours of web surfing for cat videos.

If you find yourself checking your phone every five minutes, restrict your data usage; turn off all sorts of notifications. Detach yourself from all kinds of social media to begin with. But you're only human – set an hourly timer after which you can take a brief break for 20-30 minutes to do whatever you wanted to do.

## 3. HAVE A MIND LIKE A JEDI

Concentrating is a battle that perhaps could even have Alexander the Great defeated. Food is the second greatest enemy of the mind next to social networking and my newsfeed isn't helping much since it's invaded by Foodbank posts. I find myself making an elaborate plan on how to save enough money for those scrumptious fries and cheesy burgers and the next thing I know, it's already 7 in the morning.



Focusing is especially hard when the most random thoughts battle inside the cognitive area; if you're one of those people who drift off into daydreams and embrace your inner Picasso by doodling and sketching away at the corners of the pages, I feel for you. My textbooks look like mehedi design books – I could get into business.

Set up a timer; take 20 minutes just to focus on your work and go into a working frenzy. Force yourself to study productively for 20 minutes, take five and then do it all over again. Chances are, you'll get into a groove and keep studying at a higher pace even when your frenzy time is out.

## 4. TO DO "TO-DO"

People usually give up on it halfway through but one must give it the utmost priority. List everything – big and small – that you have to study for your entire day; break big activities into smaller bits if necessary. Then, as you work through your day, check off each of the items on your list. You will feel a growing sense of pride as you visually monitor your ever-diminishing list of tasks.

Focus your list on including the tasks you typically put off. Set a deadline for things to be done by. Re-evaluate your list halfway through your day to rank your items based on highest priority. Then, tackle the most important ones before looking

back at the smaller things to do.

Keep a notebook in hand and note down every thought that comes up during work. Couldn't finish a particular sum and need help later? Write it down, set another date for it to deal with later. This'll help you to stay away from the "procrastination zone".

## 5. EMBRACE IMPERFECTION

We like to think that we're perfectionists and use that as an excuse to get away with not having to deal with difficult tasks. If you're waiting for the perfect time, the perfect supplies, or you won't stop until you've "perfected" your task, you're putting off completing your task.

Is the thought of reading that thick textbook too intimidating? Just start by reading the table of contents, or the first page. Too tired to take notes or really process the concepts? Just skim through what you need to get through and come back tomorrow to re-examine the material when you're refreshed. Getting something done is better than doing nothing – at least you'll acquire enough knowledge to answer the MCQs.

## 6. DEALING WITH DILEMMAS

You shudder when you look at that looming 72-pager chapter and push it down the "later" list. If you're a chronic procrastinator, chances are it'll never be dealt with until the very last minute of the exams when you try to cram months of preparation into your brain in one night. Sit down with that book and break down that chapter into smaller parts for you to complete each day. Don't worry about completing the entire thing, but take steps now so that doing so in the future is a breeze. Finishing the largest task first will make you feel productive and give you the boost to do other things you've been pushing aside.

The reality is that you just cannot afford to botch these exams because aunties' words will cut your soul deeper than your parents'. You need to make sure that their rants are only limited to why you're not married yet. One last tip: stop reading this article and just get to work!

*Maisha Maliha speaks what crosses her mind in the most positive way but is often misinterpreted and thought to be a lunatic. Unfollow her at [www.facebook.com/MyshoeMaliha](http://www.facebook.com/MyshoeMaliha)*



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