

**PAL**  
**PEER**  
**ASSISTED**  
**LEARNING**

STUDY SKILLS



## Study Skills

Organisation of your studies and understanding how you learn best is really important at this level.

Many first year participant are transitioning from secondary or other forms of education, different educational cultures, or from the world of work. This change can be confusing and they may not be aware of the skills you need, or where to look for assistance.

PAL is an important forum to give these participant the study and time management skills they need, with the advantage that they are shared by fellow participant' one step ahead in the journey who may have had similar experiences.

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## Common Words Used in Exams

<b>Compare</b>	Examine qualities, or characteristics, in order to determine resemblances
<b>Contrast</b>	Stress dissimilarities and differences
<b>Criticise</b>	Express your judgment with respect to the correctness or merit of the factors under consideration
<b>Define</b>	Write concise, clear, authoritative meanings, keeping in mind the class to which the item belongs, and whatever differentiated it from all other classes
<b>Discuss</b>	Examine, analyse carefully, and present considerations pro and con regarding the problems or items
<b>Enumerate</b>	A list or outline form of reply. Recount, one by one, in concise form, the points required
<b>Evaluate</b>	Present a careful appraisal, stressing both advantages and limitations
<b>Explain</b>	Clarify, elucidate, and interpret the material you present
<b>Illustrate</b>	Present a figure, diagram, or concrete example
<b>Interpret</b>	Translate, exemplify, or comment upon the subject, and, usually, give your judgment or reaction
<b>Justify</b>	Prove your thesis or show grounds for decision
<b>Outline</b>	Give main points and essential supplementary materials in a systematic manner
<b>Prove</b>	Establish something with certainty by citing evidence or by logical reasoning
<b>Relate</b>	Emphasize connections and associations
<b>Review</b>	Analyze and comment briefly, in organized sequence, upon the major points
<b>State</b>	Express the high points in brief, clear form
<b>Summarise</b>	Give in condensed form the main points or facts
<b>Trace</b>	Give a description of progress, sequence, or development from the point of origin

## 8 ways to abbreviate

### *Symbols and graphics*

= equal	** very important	£ or \$ cost, money
* important	< less than	w/ with
> greater than	& and	w/o with out
= does not equal	# number	vs versus, against
( ), { }, [ ] = information that belongs together		

### *Abbreviations*

cf = compare	eg = for example	dept = department
NYC = New York City	mx = maximum	mn = minimum

### *Use only the first syllable of the word*

pol = politics	dem = democracy	lib = liberal
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### *Use the first syllable and first letter*

subj = subject	cons = conservative
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### *Eliminate the final letters*

assoc = association	biol = biology	rep = repetition
intro = introduction	concl = conclusion	info= information

### *Omit vowels from the middle*

pprd = prepared	bkgrd = background	estmt = estimate
gov = governor	rdng = reading	orgnsm = organism

### *Use apostrophes*

gov't = government	am't = amount	cont'd = continued
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## **DOs and DON'Ts for answering essay questions in an exam**

- DO** Remember to read the directions for the exam before you begin.
- DO** Learn main ideas, key terms, steps in an argument, stages in a process.  
Also memorize verbatim at least some key phrases, definitions, or short passages.
- DO** Read through the whole paper first.
- DO** Manage your time.  
Allow enough time at the end to go back and finish incomplete answers and to proofread your paper.  
When the time is up for one question, stop writing and begin the next one.
- DO** Answer the questions you know best first.
- DO** Take time to structure your answer
- DO** Take time at the end to reread the exam.
- DON'T** start answering questions immediately.
- DON'T** panic if you think you can't answer.
- DON'T** leave any questions completely unanswered.
- DON'T** study for total recall of names, dates, facts, and figures as you might for an objective test.
- DON'T** just memorise material- connect the ideas in your head.

## Lecture Review

It should be stressed that the aim is to 'review' and not to 'introduce' material. The PAL Facilitator must emphasize to participant that sessions are designed to *complement* participation at lectures and tutorials, not to *act as a substitute* for them.

## Activities Based on Lecture Reviews

During the first 10-15 minutes of the session, have the participant summarize the most recent lecture, or have them identify the key words from that lecture.

Give participant three minutes to find support in their lecture notes to back up a given an argument.

Have the participant predict the direction of future lectures based upon the past lectures.

Have participant arrange terms from lecture and text into a structured outline.

Reinforce new terms or important information by using clearly constructed handouts

Review material from previous sessions and lectures.

Take a couple of minutes at the end of the session to summarize the main idea covered during the session. Ask the participant to help summarize.

Have participant write a one paragraph summary of the lecture. List the new vocabulary terms introduced with this lecture.

Formulate potential exam questions, based on the main ideas from the lecture.

Formulate potential answers from details in the lecture notes.

## Note taking tips

### **Finish reading first**

Generally don't take notes until you have finished reading a full paragraph or headed section and have paused to think about what you just read.

### **Be selective.**

Don't underline or jot down so many items that they overload your memory or overthink, but don't be so brief that you'll have to read through the page again when you review.

### **Use your own words.**

The jottings in the margins should be in your own words. Since your own words represent your own thinking they will later be powerful cues to the ideas on the page.

### **Be brief.**

Underline brief but meaningful phrases, rather than complete sentences. Make your marginal jottings short and clear. They will be easier to use when you review.

### **Be swift.**

Read, go back for a mini-overview, and make your notes. Then move onto the next portion of the chapter.

### **Be neat.**

Neat notes save time, since the ideas will be easily and clearly perceived.

### **Organize facts and ideas under categories.**

Items within categories are far more easily memorized than random facts and ideas.

### **Try cross-referencing.**

For example, if you find an idea on page 64 that has a direct bearing on an idea back on page 28, draw a little arrow pointing upward and write "28" by it. Then turn back to page 28 and alongside the idea there, draw an arrow pointing

downward and write “64” by it. In this way you’ll tie the two ideas together, in your mind and in your reviewing.

**Date and number your note pages and your handouts.** It will help with continuity.

**Give yourself plenty of blank spaces** in your notes, as well as plenty of room to write. This will allow you to make additional notes, sketch helpful graphics, or write textbook references. Your notes will be easier to read if you write in pen and use only one side of the paper.

**Take full and detailed notes.** If you miss something, leave a space; you may be able to fill in the blanks later. Do not stop taking notes if you are confused or if you want to ponder a particular concept. You will have time for that later.

**Abbreviations and acronyms are extremely helpful.** Suggestions for abbreviations are listed in this section. It may be difficult to make your notes look great or to have them extremely organized as you write them. Work with your notes as soon after class as possible when your recall is at its best. You may be able to fill in some blanks. Colour coding can bring some organization to your notes. For example, identify concepts and categories by highlighting items with a particular colour. If you still have problems organizing your notes, begin to formulate a specific question for your professor or study groups.

## **True / False exam questions**

**Remember to read the exam instructions before you begin.**

**Determine the number of questions and manage your time.**

Many times when True/False questions are given there are a large number of questions. If so, answer each question quickly. It may not be worth a lot of time to get one question right if the question is only worth two points on a 100 point test.

**Read each question carefully.**

Most questions contain a combination of who, what, when, where or how facts. If any one of those facts is wrong, the statement is false.

**Look for qualifiers.**

Words like never, all, none, only, and always can indicate a statement is false. On the other hand, sometimes, generally, often, and frequently can indicate a statement is true.

**Answer the questions you know first.**

Often answers to questions you don't know are supplied in other questions. Go back to answer the difficult questions later.

**Answer all questions.**

Unless points are deducted for incorrect responses, leave enough time to answer all questions.

## Short-Answer / Fill-in-the-Blank Exam Questions

**Remember to read the directions for the exam before you begin.**

**Answer the questions you know first.**

Often answers to questions you don't know are supplied in other questions. Go back to answer the difficult questions later.

**When you prepare for the exam, focus on facts and key words.**

Look over the materials as though you were going to write the exam. Try to predict questions appropriate for this type of exam.

## Note Cards

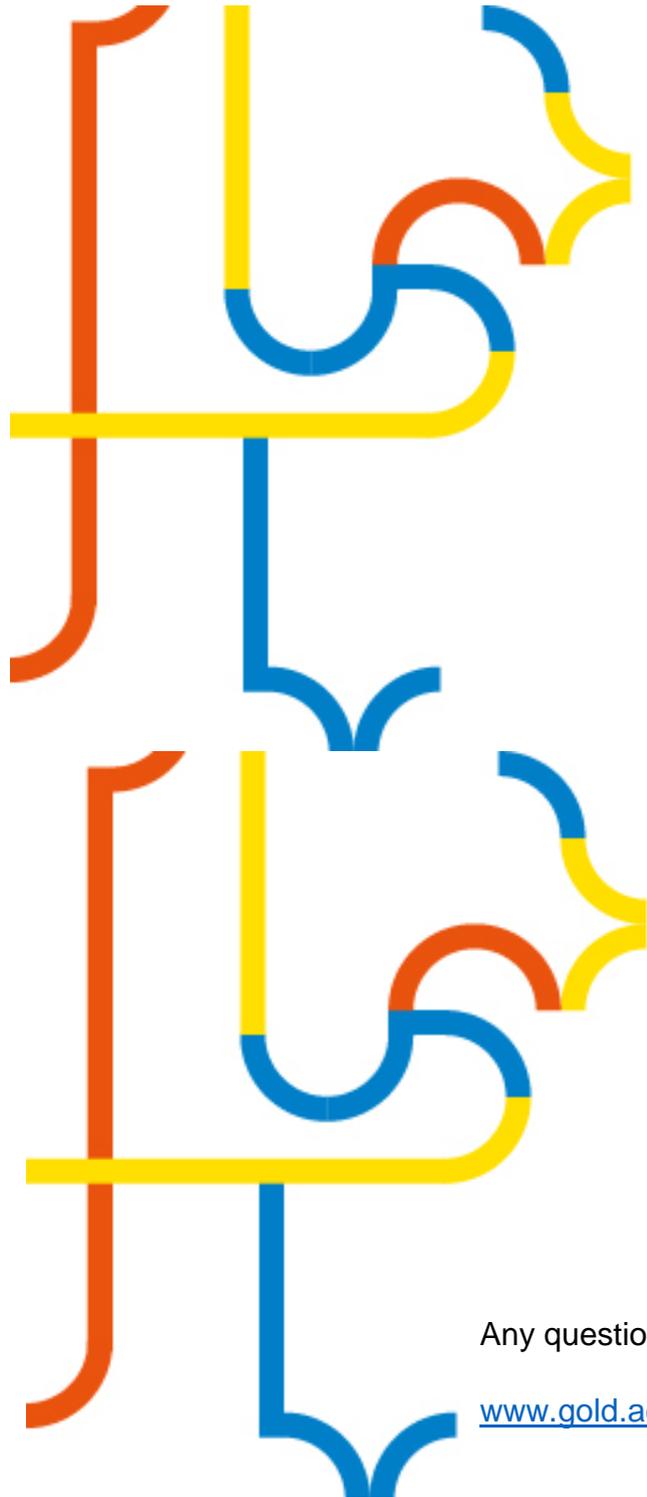
Creating and using note cards can provide a useful and portable study tool. An additional advantage of using note cards is to be able to be used flexibly and out of sequence. This can help participant learn the information free of association and be able to review multiple times in a variety of ways.

Write the cue or question on one side of the card and write the definition, description or answer on the other side.

Begin compiling the cards early in the term. Carry the cards with you and review the information many times during the day and evening.

The information that does not come to mind readily can be reviewed more often or placed in a "critical" stack. Repetition is the best way to learn the material.

Using different colours to represent different topics or key words can be a good memory aid.



Any questions email: [PAL@gold.ac.uk](mailto:PAL@gold.ac.uk)

[www.gold.ac.uk/asc](http://www.gold.ac.uk/asc)