



Nuala: Hi, I'm Nuala O'Sullivan, and you're listening to 'Exam Skills'. Now we all know there's no way around it - if you want to succeed in any exam, you have to get your preparation right. And that means knowing how best to revise so that you're ready when it's time to go into the exam room. Here's what one student says:

Student

You know right from the beginning sort of that that's what you're working towards and then it's up to everyone to strategise in whatever way works best for them.

Nuala: To strategise – to make a detailed plan for achieving success!
Here's some more advice from examiner, Mark Shea.

Mark Shea

It's a good idea to draw up a revision timetable and stick to it. Remember that language learning takes a long time. It's a slow process of absorption. So you need to start revising very early, and don't think that you can learn new things the night before the exam.

Nuala: So don't leave revision until the last minute! Language learning doesn't happen overnight so you need to start revising as soon as you can. Make a timetable for your revision and keep to your plan. Language expert Karen Adams agrees that planning your revision is very important.

Karen Adams

Don't try to push everything into the last two or three days before the exam, try to work towards it gradually, and leave a day before the exam where you don't study anything, where you just relax, and think about how much you've learnt already.

Nuala: Try to finish all your revision so you can have one full day's relaxation before the exam.

But what about the actual revising? For Ahmed, revision begins in the classroom and ends at home, every day.

Student

I try to stay concentrated in the class, to follow what the teacher says. And then when I go back home, I look back at my day's work, every night.

Nuala: The revision strategy that works best for him is to listen closely in class, take notes, and then re-write his notes later when he gets home.

Student

For myself, good notes help me to learn a lot of things. Even when I go back home and try to revise, I write it a second time. Maybe it's a summary or something like that, but it helps me to remember things. So yeah, for me, notes are really important.

Nuala: Anna also revises daily. Her strategy is to divide her revision into different sections and do at least half an hour on each one.

Student

Every day I try to revise minimum for half an hour, listening, reading, vocabulary, and speaking.

Nuala: As an EFL teacher myself, I encourage students to think very carefully about what kind of revision they're doing and why they're doing it. As Karen Adams explains, English Language exams are not memory tests, they're about being able to use the language you've learnt.

Karen Adams

Don't try to read everything that you've covered during your course. Don't try to memorise everything. It's important for you to think about what you've learnt, and how you use it. This is particularly important in English Language exams because the questions are unpredictable. You need to think about: 'How do I use this bit of language? What can I say using this bit of language?' So don't try to memorise everything, but think about how you are going to use the language.

Nuala: A good way to practise using language is to revise with another student. Stepanka finds this strategy always helps her.

Student

Well, the thing that always works for me is when I revise with a classmate, so we revise together, and we check each other's answers, and discuss mistakes, or errors we make. That helps me really a lot.

Nuala: And I'm sure you can come up with other ways to revise effectively. Try several different approaches because it's important to find out which ways work best for you. But there are two key things to remember. Here's Karen Adams again.

Karen Adams

First: don't try to memorise everything, but think about how you use language. And second: plan your programme of revision, and don't leave it until the last minute.

Nuala: Good luck and good revising!