

ADHD and exams: how to revise and cope

Exams stack everything an ADHD brain finds hardest — long timelines, delayed rewards, boring revision and high-stakes pressure — into one place. Here's how to revise in a way that works with your brain, manage the stress, and walk in prepared.

↓ Download this as a PDF

Why exam season is so hard with ADHD

It isn't about ability. Exams collide with exactly the systems ADHD affects:

- The deadline is far away, so there's no urgency — until suddenly there is.
- Revision is repetitive and low-reward, which an interest-based brain resists.
- Time blindness wrecks planning: weeks vanish, then it's the night before.
- Anxiety piles on top, making starting even harder.

The fix is a revision method built for how your brain actually learns — small, active, spaced and rewarded.

A revision plan that survives ADHD

- 1 **Work backwards from the exam date.** Break the syllabus into small daily targets so “revise everything” becomes “do these two topics today.”

2 **Revise with active recall, not re-reading.** Past papers, flashcards and self-quizzing force retrieval — the single most effective technique, and engaging enough to hold attention.

3 **Start early and space it.** A little every day beats one all-nighter; spaced review is how memory actually sticks.

4 **Time-box every session.** 25 minutes on, 5 off, with a visible countdown to beat time blindness.

5 **Make progress visible.** A “done” list you can see gives the reward hit that keeps an ADHD brain going.

Managing exam stress

- **Protect sleep** — it’s non-negotiable; an all-nighter costs more than it gains.
- **Move your body** before you study or sit the exam — it sharpens focus.
- **Breathe slowly** for a minute before you start; it settles a racing mind.
- **Reframe the nerves** — that energy can be readiness, not doom.

Get the accommodations you’re entitled to

Many students qualify for support and never ask. Depending on where you study, that can include **extra time, a separate room, or rest breaks**. Contact your school or university’s disability / learning-support service **early** — a formal ADHD diagnosis usually helps your case.

A study app for ADHD

Revise the way an ADHD brain remembers

Cadence turns your notes and past papers into active-recall study rounds, spaced automatically so it sticks by exam day — with instant rewards and a single-task loop. There's a free live demo (no sign-up) and a free 3-day trial.

Try Cadence free →

cadenceadhd.com

“Brilliant.” — Prof. Dr. Ede Frecska, Chair of Psychiatry · built on ~100 studies

Common questions

- ▶ **How do I revise for exams with ADHD?**
- ▶ **How can I focus during revision?**
- ▶ **Can I get extra time in exams for ADHD?**
- ▶ **How do I stop panicking before an exam?**

Start today, not the night before

Small, early, repeated revision is the single biggest advantage an ADHD brain can give itself. Pick one topic and do one active-recall session today — then again tomorrow.

For the full picture, read [how to study with ADHD](#) and the complete [ADHD field guide](#).

This article is for general education and is not medical advice. It cannot diagnose or treat anyone. Always speak to a qualified professional. Cadence is a learning tool, not medical advice.

notbrokenadhd.com · ADHD Field Guide · [العربية](#) · [עברית](#)



Built on research

The information in this guide is grounded in clinical and scientific sources, and the way it is laid out follows published cognitive-accessibility research for people with ADHD and neurodivergent minds:

Key scientific reference: [World Federation of ADHD International Consensus Statement](#) — 208 evidence-based conclusions (Faraone et al., 2021, Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews).

- [W3C — Making Content Usable for People with Cognitive and Learning Disabilities \(COGA\)](#)
- [Bureau of Internet Accessibility — Making your website more accessible for people with ADHD](#)
- [Stéphanie Walter — Neurodiversity & UX: cognitive-accessibility resources](#)
- [UserWay — Designing for people with ADHD](#)