



# EXAM PREPARATION INVENTORY

## ■ R E P O R T

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# Understanding Your Exam Preparation Inventory Results

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*The Exam Preparation Inventory summarizes how you are currently preparing for exams. By becoming aware of how you now study, you can learn to study more effectively. The Inventory sorts your responses into four pairs of preferences, summarizing the learning environment that energizes you, how you gather and use information, your approach to receiving feedback and making decisions, and how you organize and manage your time.*

The Exam Preparation Inventory measures your preferences for different study styles. Most individuals develop a preference for some of these styles and avoid using others in their studying. To engage in effective studying, you must become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your exam preparation style, and when it may be more effective to use an alternative style to reach your objectives. This booklet will help you describe your preferred exam preparation and study style. Learning to study using your preferred style will usually help you achieve the best results. However, it is appropriate to expose yourself to different studying methods and to develop your non-preferred styles.

Your exam preparation preferences will interact. When you finish reading the descriptions look for combinations of studying preferences. For example, if interactive environments energize you, and you prefer to gather and use abstract-theoretical information, you will likely enjoy discussions that provide opportunities to brainstorm about ideas and theories.

It is important to remember that the Exam Preparation Inventory only measures your preferences for each study style. It is not a measure of your exam preparation abilities.

## Your Exam Preparation Profile

Your Exam Preparation Inventory Profile is shown below. Look at each of the four pairs of scales. Your preferred style is the scale with the higher score and is printed in bold. The scores are on a continuum that goes from 1 to 5.

### Environments that Energize

<b>Environmentally-Interactive</b> prefer being with others when studying	<b>EI Score</b> 2	<b>ER Score</b> <b>2.3</b>	<b>Environmentally-Reflective</b> prefer to explore in-depth and reflect when learning
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### Gathering and Using Information

<b>Factual-Practical</b> focus on facts, details and relevant data	<b>FP Score</b> 2.3	<b>AT Score</b> <b>2.4</b>	<b>Abstract-Theoretical</b> prefer to focus on theories and ideas
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### Making Decisions

<b>Analytical-Logical</b> prefer a rigorous analytical approach to studying	<b>AL Score</b> <b>2.7</b>	<b>PV Score</b> 2.3	<b>Personally-Valued</b> prefer a situational and personal approach to studying
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### Organization and Time Management

<b>Organized-Planful</b> prefer to design and structure their learning activities	<b>OP Score</b> <b>2.7</b>	<b>OE Score</b> 2.6	<b>Open-Ended</b> prefer flexibility and less structured learning activities
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### CONSISTENCY

**Your Consistency score is 1.9.** The score is on a continuum that goes from 1 to 5. This scale indicates the degree to which your daily study behaviour is consistent with your exam preparation behaviour. Score below 2.5 indicate that you are likely to use different study methods for each type of studying.

On the following pages you will find a description of your preferred exam preparation styles. Read the descriptions that fit your reported study style. As you read through the tips and activities use a highlighter to summarize the strategies you want to adopt. Whatever your preference is, you may still want to spend some time looking at some of the ideas related to contrasting learning styles. Completing the summary later on in the report will help you understand and apply your specific combination of exam preparation preferences.

# Environments that Energize

This section of the report considers how, where, when, where and with whom you prefer to carry out your studying activities. Your preferences are shown below.

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## Your preferred style is: **Environmentally-Reflective**

Learners who prefer Reflective environments find it helpful to explore in-depth and reflect when learning. Although all learners will use deep reflection at times when learning, those who are energized by a reflective environment will be especially drawn to activities such as:

- Getting information as far ahead of time as possible
- Listening carefully
- Building understanding by thinking about information
- Taking time to reflect on information before responding
- Working on one thing at a time
- Focusing on depth over breadth of information
- Researching information by reading, listening and observing
- Uninterrupted, quiet study time
- Working on individual projects
- Interacting in one-to-one or small group situations
- Concentrating for extended periods of time
- Listening and observing before acting or interacting

### *Here are some specific tips and strategies that suite your Reflective Style*

Find a quiet study spot. You will assimilate information best if you can work on one topic for an extended period of uninterrupted time. Find opportunities to work by yourself. Learn by listening, observing, reading and then reflecting.

When choosing classes, consider a lecture style where you can listen and assimilate information or learning settings that provide opportunities for one-to-one or small group interactions.

Discussions may sometimes help you deepen your understanding of information, but this style of learning will not be as helpful unless you have had a chance to think about the information before the discussion.

When possible, learn about a topic in depth. If the course does not provide enough detail you may want to find alternative sources of information. However, there will be times when going too deep into one topic will create a situation where you don't have enough time or energy to study other topics or courses. In these cases you need to balance your desire to understand something in depth with the practical demands of the situation.

Take time alone to clarify and consolidate what has been learned. Avoid moving forward and learning new information until previous information is completely understood. This may require talking to your instructor or another subject area expert. If you find it difficult to formulate questions on the spot, write down what you need to know and then arrange a time to ask your questions.

Find out as much as you can ahead of time about exams and assignments. This will give you time to think about what to do and mentally prepare you for the experiences. For example, find out about timelines, what material will be covered, what you can bring into the examination room, the type and number of questions that will be asked and the way marks are distributed.

You can then anticipate and prepare for the exam. Group projects, highly interactive classes and oral exams can be a challenge. Prepare for these by studying ahead of time and by being prepared to discuss the topic. Write down and rehearse key points. Be aware of your preference to think before speaking and use fillers such as "Let me think about that for a moment". This will cue others to the fact that you are interested in and thinking about the topic, since others can mistakenly interpret your pause as a lack of interest or expertise.

It can sometimes be challenging to answer exam questions under time pressure. Practice by writing mock exams. For example, if you know you will be required to write a one-hour essay, predict a possible essay question and give yourself an hour to write. Reflect on what worked then rehearse again. This advance rehearsal will make the exam situation more comfortable and the task more familiar.

# Environments that Energize

Learning to study using your preferred style will usually help you achieve the best results. However, it is appropriate to expose yourself to different studying methods and to develop your non-preferred styles.

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*Here are some specific tips and strategies earning tips and strategies associated with your non-preferred style -  
**Environmentally-Interactive***

Interact with others and process information by debating, discussing, asking or answering questions. Link up with a study buddy or choose classes that provide opportunities to discuss or act on information learned.

When studying with someone else be aware of time on and off task. It may be tempting to discuss other topics. If you are not on task, time will pass quickly and little learning will occur.

To minimize time off-task, choose to study with people who are highly motivated to learn the material. Take time to ensure you have enough subject area expertise before conferring with others. Otherwise you may end up reinforcing and remembering inaccurate information.

When studying alone, ask yourself questions. This will help you remain active and on topic. You may benefit from rehearsing information out loud, however, also practice quiet studying, since you cannot usually talk out loud during an exam.

You may become distracted in a learning situation requiring you to listen for a long period of time without opportunities to interact or ask questions. Increase your focus in these situations by taking notes or by thinking about questions that you want answered.

When studying for exams take short, frequent breaks to refocus your attention. Use a variety of active study strategies, such as asking questions, creating notes or anticipating exam questions.

Overview course materials and highlight the most important points to study in detail. Although you will be most comfortable learning an overview or focusing on the relevant facts, your learning situation may require you to learn some material in depth. Take time to analyze each specific course so you are prepared for the level of depth required.

# Gathering and Using Information

This section of the report considers how you prefer to take in information when studying or learning. Your preferences are shown below.

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## Your preferred style is: **Abstract-Theoretical**

Learners who prefer gathering and using abstract-theoretical information are interested in theories and ideas. Although all learners must focus on theories and ideas at times, those who prefer abstract-theoretical information will be especially drawn to activities such as:

- Grasping new ideas and possibilities
- Generalizing and summarizing information
- Learning about theories and models
- Organizing information conceptually
- Setting broad long-term learning goals
- Focusing on abstract ideas rather than real data and facts
- Seeing trends and patterns in facts and data
- Integrating information from a variety of sources
- Looking for a general overview before understanding specifics
- Moving between ideas and thoughts in a non-sequential manner
- Enjoying metaphors, analogies and other symbolic representations of ideas
- Originating and innovating new ways to think about topics

*Here are some specific tips and strategies that suite your Interactive Style*

Integrate information from many sources and focus your learning on generalizations, abstract ideas and concepts. Link and transfer what you are learning in one course or topic to similar ideas and concepts in another. Use study techniques such as mind mapping that provide a non-sequential way to summarize information.

Although linking information and thinking of alternative perspectives can be helpful learning strategies, these activities can also result in general breadth rather than specific depth of understanding in a topic or course. Specifically define what level of detail you need to learn to avoid situations where you are penalized for not supporting ideas and theories with facts and details.

Memorizing facts and details may seem mundane and uninteresting. Develop strategies for memorizing details, such as using mnemonics, tables, charts, flashcards or detailed study notes. Use repetition to learn and assimilate the details.

It can be difficult at times to limit the scope of what you are learning. Although it will be interesting to make connections, avoid being distracted by tangentially related ideas and alternative ways of interpreting data. Focus on what you need to know.

Sometimes, such as in math or science courses, it is essential to follow a step-by-step approach to solving a problem or tracing a process. Practice writing down all the steps when completing these types of activities. This will ensure you don't miss any steps and allow you to go back and check your work.

You might take on more tasks and responsibilities than you can realistically manage. Take the time to do a reality check and consider how much time and energy each of your commitments will require. Remember you have a tendency to see what could be and may underestimate how difficult a task really is or the time needed to complete it.

When writing exams you may become distracted by words that trigger ideas or may begin to explore related topics. In multiple choice questions, don't waste time relating all the distractors back to the question. Read the question carefully and then look specifically for the best answer. Similarly in essay questions you may lose marks by discussing ideas indirectly related to the question asked. It is important to focus on answering exactly what the question is asking.

# Gathering and Using Information

Learning to study using your preferred style will usually help you achieve the best results. However, it is appropriate to expose yourself to different studying methods and to develop your non-preferred styles.

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*Here are some specific tips and strategies earning tips and strategies associated with your non-preferred style -*  
***Factual-Practical***

Link what you are learning to practical applications. Find out how, when and where you will use what is being learned. Seek relevant concrete examples of what you are learning and arrange to do "real world" projects.

Engage your senses when learning. This might include working with hands-on materials, applying a process in your work or home, using color coding or highlighting, watching, using or creating visual materials, hearing information and other ways of interacting with learning materials.

Take a realistic focus and set short-term practical goals. Continue to build on what you already know by relating new information to your knowledge, competencies, experiences and skills. This link to what you know to be true and verifiable will make the learning more relevant and real.

Focus on facts and details. Memorization is often a good strategy for learning these. Organize the facts and details sequentially. If you depend too much on memorization as a learning strategy, you may become overwhelmed. In situations where there are simply too many details or when instructors are expecting general answers, look for themes and patterns so you can integrate details.

Exams requiring you to integrate information and pull out main ideas can be more difficult than exams where you can recite details. When studying, consciously look for themes and make comparisons. For example, if you are learning two theories, compare and contrast them. List ways they are the same and different. This will give you a starting point for answering questions requiring you to demonstrate integration of information.

Theoretical and abstract information will be of less interest than practical information. You will need to find ways to ground theory to realities by finding practical applications or concrete illustrations. Use your experience and background knowledge as a starting point to link the theory to specific examples. This will make the theory more real and useful.

In some learning situations you will be required to make symbolic, abstract interpretations of information or interpret various metaphors and analogies. Practice using metaphors yourself and read others' interpretations of symbols to build this ability. When taking humanities courses such as Philosophy or English, it can help to find and study interpretations published by others before making your own.

# Making Decisions

This part of your report examines how you prefer to evaluate information and make decisions. It also considers how you prefer to relate to other learners and teachers and receive feedback. Your preferences are shown below.

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## Your preferred style is: **Analytical-Logical**

Learners who evaluate information and make decisions using an analytical-logical approach will demonstrate an objective and rigorous exam preparation style. Although all learners must be objective and rigorous at times, those who prefer this decision making style will be especially drawn to activities such as:

- Working with highly competent cohorts and teachers
- Spotting flaws and inaccuracies in materials and ideas
- Examining and evaluating data and/or data trends
- Looking for cause and effect relationships
- Finding logical reasons for learning
- Debating and critiquing what is learned
- Appraising the source and credibility of information given
- Considering logical consequences and implications
- Asking questions; especially "why"
- Judging information rather than simply accepting it
- Placing information into a logical framework to increase understanding
- Receiving clear, objective, corrective feedback

*Here are some specific tips and strategies that suite your Analytical-Logical Style*

It will be difficult to learn from someone when you have doubts about their expertise or competence. Assess the competency of the instructor before choosing courses. In a similar way, find competent individuals to work with if you are required to do group projects.

You will likely not accept information at face value and will want to be convinced about something before you are willing to accept it. Find opportunities to ask questions and validate information as a way to further your understanding.

Use logical analysis and critical thinking to evaluate and understand the information you are learning. Seek information from credible sources and assess underlying biases and assumptions.

Consider logical consequences and implications of information. This will help you assimilate and process what you are learning. Be sure to find logical reasons for why you need to learn something.

Create challenges for yourself in the learning setting. Seek opportunities to compete with others or to improve your past accomplishments when learning. Debating, arguing or challenging accepted ideas could also hone your learning. Some learners don't like to compete, so choose competitors carefully.

Ask for clear and direct feedback. This will provide you with the information you need to correct errors and improve grades. Seek courses that provide learners with clear criteria for evaluation.

Although you will be comfortable being objective and task-focused in your learning, some instructors and students will want to establish rapport and focus on the learning atmosphere. Demonstrate some patience with this and build rapport with instructors and other students. The rapport you build may indirectly affect your marks and opportunities.

# Making Decisions

Learning to study using your preferred style will usually help you achieve the best results. However, it is appropriate to expose yourself to different studying methods and to develop your non-preferred styles.

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*Here are some specific tips and strategies earning tips and strategies associated with your non-preferred style -  
**Personally-Valued***

When choosing courses and instructors, look for a link to your personal interests and values. Connect learning to what is important to you personally and to the values you hold. Find instructors who respect you as an individual.

Connect with someone who can provide support and encouragement while you are learning. This person can be inside or outside of the learning setting. Focus on rewarding yourself when you have accomplished a goal or met a learning challenge.

Interact with other people who are collaborative rather than competitive in their approach to learning. Even if you are in a highly competitive learning setting, focus on meeting your own learning objectives rather than comparing yourself to others.

When choosing learning activities, focus on those that will be most influential in helping you to learn and develop.

Challenge yourself gently and give yourself positive feedback for trying and learning new things. Find ongoing ways to reinforce and reward your learning efforts.

Identify how the material you are learning could have a positive affect on people. Find case studies and examples or research the personal stories behind the people involved in creating or researching the subject material. Seek to understand their passions and motivators.

You will seek personal and positive feedback during your learning. Recognize that others may have a style of giving feedback that is objective and corrective. Try not to take this type of feedback personally, rather look at it as an opportunity to learn and grow.

If you do not like or respect an instructor or the material, you may dislike a course. Although this is a natural link for you, it will not be helpful to be affected personally by other people or subject material. Strive to remain objective. Even if you disagree with a person or the material, be open to completing the learning to the best of your ability. If the discord is too much, perhaps find an alternative instructor or course.

# Organization and Time Management

This part of your report examines how you prefer to structure and organize your learning environment. Your preferred style is shown below.

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## Your preferred style is: **Organized-Planful**

Learners using an organized-planful approach will prefer to define and structure their learning activities. Although all learners must structure and organize their learning at times, those who prefer this approach will be especially drawn to activities such as:

- Making and following plans and schedules
- Taking charge, coordinating actions and achieving results
- Organizing and structuring both learning materials and course content
- Defining manageable, achievable results
- Seeking clear learning objectives and timelines
- Clarifying and defining assignments and instructor expectations
- Completing one task before starting on another
- Using study time efficiently
- Defining the scope and time required for studying a specific topic
- Starting early on projects and completing work before deadlines when possible
- Seeking order and being methodical
- Deciding and moving forward in the pursuit of getting things done

*Here are some specific tips and strategies that suite your Organized-Planful Style*

Get information from your instructors regarding required readings, deadlines and exam dates so you can begin your planning process. Use a planning system to organize your deadlines and other responsibilities.

Set up a schedule and follow it. This will enable you to manage your time well and complete assignments ahead of deadlines.

Leave some open time in your schedule to accommodate unexpected interruptions and last minute changes. Having some open time will leave you less stressed when the unexpected occurs.

Start projects and studying for exams well in advance to avoid the stress involved in a last minute rush. Take steps to ensure the materials you need are available when you need them.

Set and meet goals that are linked to measurable results. Accomplishing results will be a motivator for you and a way to track your progress. Set a performance target to meet when preparing for an exam and methodically work towards meeting your goal.

Organize your learning materials, preferably in a specific learning space. If you don't have access to a learning space on a continuous basis, create a briefcase or other storage container that holds everything you need. You will find it very distracting to look around for supplies and materials during your study times.

Clarify expectations with your instructor. Exam information such as the type of questions, specific content, length, format, criteria for evaluation and time limit will help you focus on how and when to prepare. Use this information to tailor your study sessions.

If you need to work with others, choose individuals who prefer to get their work done ahead of time. You may become stressed if you are required to accommodate those who prefer a last minute rush for accomplishing tasks.

# Organization and Time Management

Learning to study using your preferred style will usually help you achieve the best results. However, it is appropriate to expose yourself to different studying methods and to develop your non-preferred styles.

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*Here are some specific tips and strategies earning tips and strategies associated with your non-preferred style - **Open-Ended***

Variety and flexibility will be comfortable for you. Do a variety of study activities and, when possible, keep your options open when choosing projects. Multiple sources of information and a variety of perspectives will be more interesting than a single one. Work on what is most interesting whenever possible (without avoiding tasks you will never have any interest for).

Avoid situations where you will be forced to follow a highly rigid or routine schedule. Keep your options open and be spontaneous in your approach. At the same time, ensure you are aware of and prepared for specific course requirements and deadlines.

Look for opportunities to explore new information or ideas. You will enjoy seeking new information, but be careful not to divert too far from what you need to study. Tangential pieces of information can distract you from studying the required course material.

You will likely find yourself most energized to study just before exam time and most motivated to complete projects just before they are due. Allow yourself time to accommodate this style. At the same time be careful not to start too late so that your performance is negatively affected.

Watch out for possible conflicts in deadlines and surges in workload. For example, if you have a paper due and two exams to write, you may not be able to use your last minute study style effectively. Adjust your work accordingly rather than becoming overwhelmed by multiple deadlines.

Anticipate and maneuver your way through each course and each exam. Adapt to meet the depth and breadth of learning required by each instructor and accommodate each instructor's preferences.

Make your study time as playful as possible. Be spontaneous, active, practical as well as insightful in coming up with unique and effective ways to study a topic.

## My Study Preferences

Summarize your study preferences in the boxes below by copying in any activities, strategies or tips that will help you learn. Some boxes may have very few or no points and others may have several.

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Environments that Energize	Environmentally-Interactive	Environmentally-Reflective
Gathering and Using Information	Factual-Practical	Abstract-Theoretical
Making Decisions	Analytic-Logical	Personally Valued
Organization and Time Management	Organized-Planful	Open-Ended

Use this information to maximize the use of your learning preferences. If you have an instructor, tutor, coach, mentor or friend who is supporting your learning, you may want to share this information with them.

# Exam Preparation

## Tips and Strategies for all Learners

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Start preparing to write final exams at the very beginning of the school term. When reading or listening, focus on what you will need to remember and how to best summarize and organize the subject materials for studying. Create study notes on an ongoing basis. It is much easier to study as you go than to try to catch up and learn several months of material in a short time frame.

Be an active learner in the classroom and when studying. Many people lull themselves into complacency when listening or reading and re-reading course material and class notes. The material may look familiar and make sense, but this doesn't mean you will be able to recite or recall it. Activities can include making or taking notes, asking questions (to yourself or others), summarizing and integrating materials, setting up charts or other visual aids or writing down things you remember. Try using colored pencils or highlighters to emphasize key words, facts or ideas. Or use summarizing techniques such as outlines, word maps, and flow charts to capture and organize information. Keep yourself active and thinking about the course material.

Focus on what you don't know. It is more motivating to study topics you are doing well in, but the time is usually better spent in topics and courses that are more difficult.

Learn from your mistakes. Study exams you have already taken to analyze the types of errors you are making. Then correct the error. For example, if you are misreading questions, slow down and read questions more carefully. If you are making calculation errors, check your work. If you are missing marks because you didn't learn specific dates or details, make a strategy to learn these. For every error, think of a specific study strategy to correct it.

Many people review the first and last parts of the content much more than material in the middle. Start your study sessions by reviewing different parts of the course first. This will help you avoid over-learning the materials at the beginning.

Review material as soon as possible after learning it. This will give you an immediate memory benefit. Repetition is known to enhance memory. Repeat, recite, rehearse and review information. Accept the fact that most learners need to go over material several times before it is consolidated into memory, especially when a large amount of information is being learned.

Predict possible exam questions. Do this by gathering information from the teacher, reviewing course material and by looking at past exams if possible. Then focus your studying and prepare answers for the anticipated questions.

Separate understanding from assimilation - it is not advisable to try to understand a lot of new information right before an exam. Just before an exam you should be assimilating what you already understand by reviewing, integrating and reinforcing the learning. Otherwise you can become confused and start to mix up information.

# Exam Writing

## Tips and Strategies for all Learners

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Be physically prepared to write an exam. Dress comfortably in layers to accommodate hot or cold examination rooms. Eat well but lightly, since the blood flow will be shunted away from your digestive system during stress. Get a good sleep before your exam. Take water into the exam if you can. Avoid painkillers, antihistamines, excess coffee or any other drugs that may affect concentration and alertness.

Overview the exam and plan your strategy for writing. Notice how many questions there are and the value of each question. Balance your time accordingly. If given the option, do what you know best first. This will increase your confidence and get the information flowing. Continue to track and balance your time throughout the exam.

Read each question carefully. For multiple choice questions, read all distractors carefully keeping your focus on answering the question. Use a systematic process of elimination to narrow the options. After systematically and carefully choosing the best answer, don't go back and second-guess your process.

For essay or other long answer questions, create an outline or summary of main points to organize your thoughts before starting to write. When given a choice of essay questions to answer, outline what you know about each, so you can choose the one you are best prepared to answer.

Use blank paper to write down information you have memorized. Having the information in front of you takes away the pressure to recall it. If you are unsure about a word or question, try jotting down any information you can think of about the topic. This may help you remember additional information.

If you find yourself becoming stressed, breathe deeply, collect your thoughts and do your best. Remind yourself you have prepared for this exam and you will do the best you can.

Leave time to check that you have recorded your answers correctly. When in doubt, guess, unless there is a penalty for incorrect answers.