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8 practical
study tips that
(really) work

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the 12 best
strategies to ace
your exams

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mental health
check-in

•

it's not only
about grades



SURVIVING

1

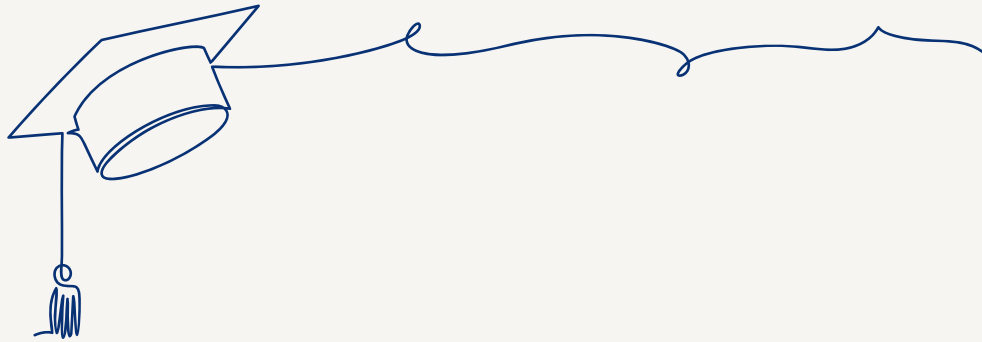
HELLO !

I'm Joana from Class of 2025, currently studying Medicine in Italy.

I put this guide together because I know what you've signed for. I've done the IB myself, and there will definitely be times when you'll question your sanity. It's tough, and there will be days when you'll probably feel like a zombie.

Despite being a grind, I wouldn't choose any other curriculum. The IB really helps you when you start university and get ready for your career. In this guide, I'll share real study strategies that work, advice on balancing hard work with your mental health, and much more. If you want to do well and get through the IB, keep this guide handy!

IF ONLY YOU KNEW...



Before coming to the TBSW, someone at my previous school told me I wouldn't make it into Medicine.

I was devastated, and my self-confidence plummeted.

TBSW, together with my fierce determination, passion, and commitment to achieving my goal of becoming a med student, made it all possible.

Let me tell you...

Looking back, I realize, more than ever, that TBSW is not a group. It's a whole school community you belong to and participate in. So, be proud of this and be proud of yourself for starting the IB.

My **teachers...** I'll never forget them because they believed in me. I can't say this enough: if you have doubts, voice them to your teachers. They'll welcome your questions as if they were freshly baked donuts. Of course, they'll challenge you, but they're cheering you too, even when you don't feel it.

When I started **university**, I realized that the **IB** had given me a lot of **advantages** in terms of depth and knowledge in subjects.

So, don't worry, you'll be fine.

2

ORGANIZATION

IB can be daunting, but with the right tools and consistent application, you'll master its strategy.

There's no other way to put it:

The best way to be prepared is to get prepared.

OSDRA will be your mantra and stands for:

Organization. Study. Deadlines. Revise. Apply.

In this chapter, we'll cover together a very important topic: **organization**.

ORGANIZATION

There's something organic in the word "organization", right?

Organization stands for what is natural and everything that helps you with the IB flow.



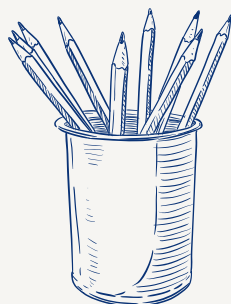
First things first:

1. Your **study place** should be comfortable, well-lit, and quiet.
2. **Declutter.** Clean your study space and decorate it with things that make you feel happy (photos of your friends, family, or your pet, holidays, etc.). If you like, bring a plant or two.
3. If you can, buy a **Pomodoro clock**. They're very affordable and helpful. I'll get back to this point further on.

ORGANIZATION

Let's bring organization to the next level:

1. Document trays, dossiers, notebooks, post-its, magic boards, and other stationery: make **organization** and **structure** a priority from day one.
2. Make an **after-class timetable**. This will help you organize your time in the best possible way.
3. **(Re) Adjust** your after-class timetable as often as needed. Check your plan each week and make changes as needed.
4. **Use your natural strengths**. If you focus better at night, tackle harder topics then. If you work best in the morning, do them then.



3

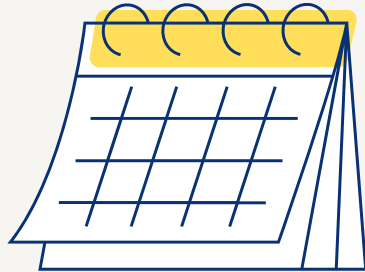
STUDY TIPS THAT WORK

IB stands for study hard.

There are a lot of study tips, but in this guide, I'll share the **8** that worked for both my closest friends and me.

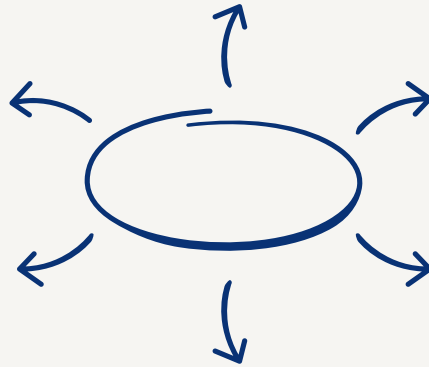
They all have one thing in common: simplicity. However, simplicity alone won't do the job. You'll have to **apply** them **consistently over time**. Some will have an immediate positive impact; others will need to be adapted to your profile.

STUDY TIPS THAT WORK



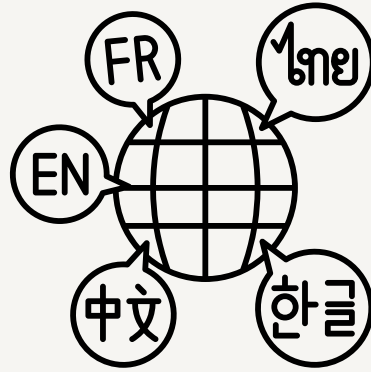
- 1. Rank your subjects.** Begin by reviewing your subjects. Rank them from strongest to weakest. Make sure to spend your time wisely, giving extra attention to your higher-level subjects.
- 2. Break each subject into smaller topics or units.** Schedule these on your calendar to ensure you cover everything.
- 3. Mobile pause.** While studying, put your mobile in silent mode. Also, silence all notifications or alerts to avoid distractions.
- 4. Respect the Deadlines.** Treat internal deadlines as set in stone. Missing one creates a "debt" you will pay interest on during exam season.
- 5. Students' portal and Firefly.** Please check them daily for the most up-to-date information.

STUDY TIPS THAT WORK



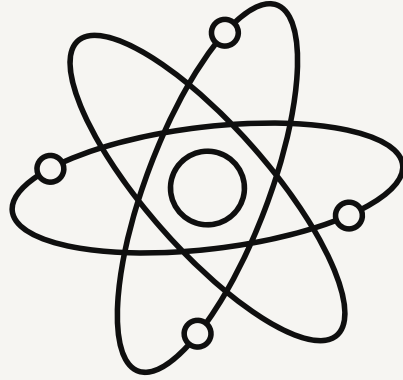
6. **The Pomodoro Technique.** Short, frequent study sessions work better than long periods of cramming. Work for 45 to 60 minutes, then take a 5 to 10-minute break. Change subjects each day to keep your mind fresh.
7. **Tasks.** You spent the whole day in classes, and you have 1000 tasks to do. As frustrating as it may be, don't view these tasks as a chore. It's the primary way you identify what you don't know before the stakes are high.
8. **Mindmaps are life.** For content-heavy subjects (Bio, History, Psych), create mind maps to see how concepts connect. If you can't visualize the link, you haven't mastered the topic. I used static writing sheets that you can safely stick to walls without damaging the painting. Plus: they're reusable.

LANGUAGES



1. InThinking - worksheets, podcasts, exercises, listening.
2. Kognity - quizzes, reading.
3. TurboAI - question generator.
4. StudyFetch - games, podcasts, live tutor.
5. Your books - reading, exercises, listening, writing.

SCIENCES



1. Revision Dojo - Question Bank, notes generator, sample papers.
2. Kognity - quizzes, reading.
3. StudyFetch - games, podcasts, live tutor.
4. Your books - reading, exercises, listening, writing.
5. Ninja Nerd + Bio Ninja - Biology notes, videos.
6. MSJ Chem - IB Chemistry videos

INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES



1. Revision Dojo - Question Bank, notes generator, sample papers.

2. StudyFetch - games, podcasts, live tutor.

3. InThinking - all key studies (important!)

4. Revision Village - Question Bank

5. ibdocs - past papers

MATHS



1. Revision Dojo - Question Bank, notes generator, sample papers.
2. Revision Village - Question Bank.
3. ibdocs - past papers.
4. Save My Exams - explanations.
5. Your teacher!

EXTRA...



1. Notion
2. Revision Dojo
3. Bio Ninja
4. NinjaNerd
5. InThinking
6. ibdocs
7. StudyFetch
8. Kognity
9. MSJ Chem
10. Textbooks
11. Anna's Archive
12. Revision Village
13. EconPlusDal
14. IBonomics.org
15. IBGeographyPods
16. And much more...

4

DEADLINES

There will be plenty of them, don't worry!

To meet **deadlines**, you'll need two things: **organization** and **time management**.

It can be tough to plan ahead, but getting organized early helps you avoid last-minute stress.

The 5 strategies you're about to read can help you make a plan and finish your work on time. Usually, once you start a task you've been putting off, it feels less overwhelming than you thought.

Try to begin, even if it's just a small step.



1. Use a wall planner, diary, or a watch to help you **plan backwards from your deadline**. This will make it easier to organize, track, and stay on top of your studies and tasks.
2. **Prioritize** your tasks when you have several deadlines. Focus on what is due soonest, which tasks are worth the most marks, and any practical steps like writing a draft first.
3. **Plan ahead** so you can start tasks right away, knowing what you need to do and how to do it. Without a plan, it's easy to lose time deciding what to do and end up getting nothing done.
4. Try **multitasking** by reading course notes or research while you travel, or brainstorming essay ideas while you exercise. Moving around can actually help your brain work better.
5. Set a **routine** by doing certain tasks at the same time each day. Once it becomes a habit, you'll do it without even thinking about it.

4

REVISE

Revise = Seeing again

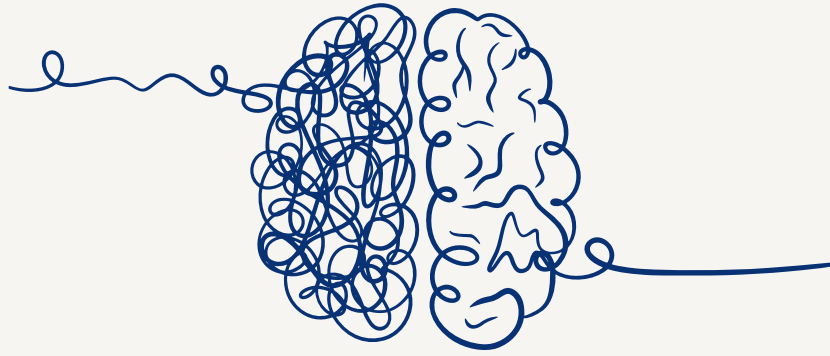
You're approaching exam season and, yes, anxiety kicks in.

Revising is one of the best things you can do to avoid getting too nervous on exam days. Also, revising includes going through previously written things again to grasp, memorize, understand, and retain them better.

REVISE 1000X TIMES

Did you know that, by revising, you'll increase the chances of being successful in **11** different ways during exam season?

- **Strengthens Memory.** Revising regularly and consistently will improve memory as compared to stuffing.
- **Increases Retention.** By revising, you'll enhance your ability to remember the information correctly when taking the exams.
- **Enhances Understanding.** Once you repeat your notes, you begin to see relations between ideas and understand their applications.
- **Improves Exam Performance.** You'll improve problem-solving skills under stress and comprehend question patterns, making time actually work for you.



- **Builds Confidence, Reduces Stress, and significantly lowers your fear of forgetting.**
- **Identifies Knowledge Gaps.** You'll identify areas where you are weak and correct them before the exam.
- **Promotes Active Learning.** Revising can turn passive learning into active learning by asking you to summarize, paraphrase, draw diagrams, and test yourself, all of which help you learn more and better.
- **Refines Exam Techniques.** You'll improve your writing style, how you logically present your answers, and the time you have to answer the questions.
- **Improves Clarity.** You'll be able to simplify complex points, ensure you are correct, and reorganize your ideas.



- **Develops Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills.** By revising, you'll start to recognize patterns, relationships, and principles underlying a topic or a group of topics.
- **Encourages Time Management and Discipline.** A revision schedule takes planning, consistency, and discipline. It will teach you how to use your time well, procrastinate less, and ensure you keep up the pace...and progress.



Now that you've the why, let's move to the **how** to revise:

- **Past papers and mark schemes** are some of the best tools for IB exam success. They show you common patterns, typical wording, and the level of detail examiners want.
- **Start small.** Begin with single questions instead of full papers. After each one, check your answer with the mark scheme and make changes as needed. At first, don't worry about the marks. Focus on learning the process: practice leads to improvement.
- **Try to think like the examiners.** Mark schemes show how and when marks are given, such as how many points are for knowledge or application in a question. They also show what examiners ignore or do not give credit for.
- **Mark your own work.** Write your answers in black and make corrections in green. Keep track of where you lost marks so you can avoid repeating the same mistakes.



- **Practice under exam conditions.** Once you can score well without worrying about time, start doing timed practice. IB exams are intense, and time can be a big challenge. As your exams get closer, try to finish whole sections of past papers within strict time limits.
- **Spaced repetition** means spreading your study sessions over time, like studying a topic for 30 minutes every few days instead of cramming. The breaks between sessions help you remember better. Use flashcards for things like formulas, definitions, quotes, and key terms.
- **Active recall** means testing yourself on material without looking at your notes. This is a very effective way to revise. For example, after studying a topic, close your notes and write down everything you remember. Then check what you missed and try again.

- **Study with your friends.** This is a win-win way to revise. Students who explain topics to others usually remember them much better, and their classmates benefit as well.
- Write **detailed notes** on the right, add **cue questions** on the left to test yourself, and put a **short summary** at the bottom. This method helps you remember, keeps your notes organized, and makes review sessions quicker and more useful.
- **Mind maps** work extremely well for many subjects, like Biology, Psychology, and Theory of Knowledge (TOK), where making connections between ideas is important.
- **Exam-style writing drills** are useful for essay subjects like English, History, and Economics. Practice writing introductions and conclusions. Marks for these sections often follow a set pattern, so knowing the format will help you do well.
- **Track your progress.** If you keep a record of everything you've done to prepare, looking back can help you stay motivated. Use checklists, progress bars, or revision calendars. Remember, exams are the top of the mountain, so it helps to see how far you've already come.

5

APPLY > EXAMS

The arrival of exams brings inevitable anxiety, the fear of forgetting everything, and the prospect of everything seeming like an insurmountable mountain. I don't know a single person who has been 100% calm before exams.

Next, I'll share some strategies that may help you reduce anxiety and build your trust in yourself.

APPLY > EXAMS

You know it's paramount to have a good night sleep and eat a balanced breakfast, right? If you're having exams in the morning and in the afternoon, bring some fruit, cereal bars, a chocolate and plenty of water to stay hydrated.

Notice how you're feeling and acknowledge it. **You're feeling nervous because the exam matters.** Knowing those feelings are there won't make them go away, but it can help keep them from escalating.

Give thanks and **wave goodbye to negative thoughts.** If all the negative self-talk is getting into your mind, flip the coin and focus on a **positive mindset.** You say something like "Ok, guys, thanks for reminding me, but I'm capable of doing this. I've studied, I'm prepared, I'm confident, and now I need to focus. Bye."



Take 3-5 seconds big, deep breaths. Inhale positive feelings, exhale the negatives. Stretch your arms, relax your shoulders, adjust your posture. You can do this!

Pace yourself. If you find yourself rushing through the questions, slow down. Reread the question carefully so you can answer it as best you can.

Underline keywords or concepts. This will help you to address and construct your answer correctly.

Stop comparing yourself to everyone else. It might seem like everyone else has got this, but you don't really know how other people have prepared or the situations they are in – and it doesn't really matter. Leaving early doesn't mean someone aced the exam. Remember that you'll be better off if you focus on yourself and your own process.



Keep this always in mind: When this exam is over, I deserve to celebrate or reward myself!

Trust yourself. You've been preparing for this moment, and many students have been in your place before. They've done it and so will you!



MENTAL HEALTH

We all have those moments when we feel overwhelmed by stress and anxiety. There are times when we break down and start doubting everything. Let me tell you: it's natural for that to happen. And if it does, you shouldn't feel guilty or criticize yourself. On the contrary, embrace everything you're feeling, take a break, breathe deeply, and most importantly, talk about it.

The next two pages are dedicated to taking care of yourself.



- Make sure to include **rest** in your routine. Burnout can ruin your productivity and may even cause insomnia or sickness, which can really hurt your performance during exam season. Try to take one full rest day each week.
- **The Sleep Multiplier.** Sorry, but all-nighters are a scam. A **rested brain** at 70% knowledge will outperform a sleep-deprived brain at 100% knowledge every single time.
- **Nutrition & The "IB Menu".** Don't skip breakfast. Your brain runs on glucose. Create an "IB Menu" of 3-5 healthy, quick meals, so you aren't living on caffeine and snacks. This is especially important during exam weeks.
- **Physical Exercise.** Find an activity that helps you "stress out": whether it's the gym, a sport, or a 20-minute walk. Moving your body clears the "brain fog" that comes from staring at a laptop for hours.



- **Friends & Family.** Lean on your tribe. Surround yourself with people who will study with you at 2:00 PM and laugh with you at 2:00 AM.
- **Significant People.** Keep your family and significant others in the loop. They are your safety net when the pressure gets high.
- **Reach out.** If you're struggling, don't keep it to yourself. Reach out to the friends you trust most. To a family member, form tutor or the school psychologist. Don't feel embarrassed or weak. Reaching out is the healthiest thing you can do for yourself.

7

IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT
THE GRADES...

Of course, the grades matter: they're what give you access to the universities you'd like to attend. But the IB is also about learning to be a good person, more attentive and prepared for the challenges that await us after the IB.



- During IB, I participated in extracurricular activities that helped me not only to pay attention to the community but also to the people around me. More importantly, these activities allowed me to help and, therefore, grow. And also to relax during the activities and the social interaction.
- If you see that a colleague is struggling, offer them help. “Can I help you?” and/or “How are you today?” are two of the kindest questions you can ask.
- Be curious, show that you care. Go the extra mile, show that you’re committed to your success. Have a good attitude. All these open doors and, of course, your teachers and the whole school community will notice it.
- Don’t skip classes unless something unforeseen comes up. Please contact your form tutor promptly to let them know you are absent.

FINAL WORDS

The IB is a journey you'll remember for a long time. You're tested to the limits, you'll learn and apply amazing things, you'll meet ups and downs. You'll learn to trust yourself, to be kind, and perform well, really well. For that, you have to commit to your progress and, of course, to the kind of future you wish for yourself.

In the IB, your **teachers** are your most valuable resource.

They aren't just there to grade you; they are key to your successful journey. Your teachers are human too. So, always be respectful and kind. Always.

Doubts: If a question arises while studying, that is a good signal! It means you're engaging with the material. Never be afraid to ask questions; be afraid to silence them.

Feedback is Gold: When a teacher gives you feedback, don't just look at the grade. Work specifically on the areas they highlighted for improvement. That is the only way to climb from a 5 to a 7.

I wish you all the very best!





THE BRITISH
SCHOOL
Warsaw, Poland