

Exam revision and technique

REVISION TIPS

R1: Learn the arguments. Who said what? What terms and concepts did they use? How did they defend their positions?

R2: Practise applying your knowledge by answering questions about it. The best questions to practise with are past exam questions, but you can also make up questions for yourself.

R3: Revise those aspects of the issue that are hard to understand. Practice arguing that they *can* be understood in more than one way, and why they *should* be understood to have the meaning you give them.

R4: Prepare examples beforehand, rather than try to invent them in the exam. If you can use your own, that's great (you'll get extra marks if they are good). But they must be short and they must make the right point – so try them out on your friends and teachers first.

R5: Spend time identifying the main claims and arguments involved in each issue you have studied, putting arguments in your own words, stating clearly what the conclusion is and what the premisses are. Point out or show how the reasoning is supposed to work.

R6: Think reflectively about the arguments and issues. Practise arguing for and against a particular view. Think about the place and importance of the arguments for the issue as a whole.

R7: Think about how your judgments on the various arguments you have studied add up. Do they lead to one conclusion, one point of view being right? Or do you think arguments for and against one position are closely balanced?

R8: Create structured outlines or web-diagrams for particular issues. Try to cover all the main points.

R9: Practice writing timed answers. Use your notes at first, but then practise without them.

EXAM TIPS

E1. Read through all the relevant questions before starting your answer. This will help you to decide which question you can answer best overall, taking into account all the parts.

E2. The number of marks available for each part should be a rough guide to how long you spend on it. But allow a little extra time for the later parts and parts you find difficult.

E3. Before starting your answer, read the question again very closely. Take note of every word, and especially the 'key word' which tells you what to do.

E4. Before you start your answer, especially if it will be comparatively long, it can be worth writing out your outline or web-diagram first. This can help remind you of the key points you want to make, and the order in which you want to make them.

E5. Keep your examples short and make sure they support the point you want to make. Always explain how they support your point.

E6. Four rules of thumb:

- Don't use a 'technical term', like 'the state of nature' or 'the ontological argument', without saying what it means.
- Describe a theory before evaluating it. (If you have described it in answer to a previous part, you don't need to describe it again.)
- Keep related ideas together. If you have a thought later on, add a footnote indicating where in the answer you want it to be read.
- Don't state the conclusion to an argument before you've discussed the argument, especially if you are going to present objections to that conclusion. You can state what the argument hopes to show, but don't state it *as* a conclusion.

E7. Make sure your discussion is not just reporting a sequence of points of view, but presents objections and replies, and tries to reach a particular conclusion.

E8. Leave time to check your answer at the end. You may want to add a helpful sentence here and there.