



# Preparing for seen exams: video tutorial

<http://www.screencast.com/t/DClw7TCf>

## Transcript

**Introduction:** Welcome to this tutorial on preparing for seen exams, from the University of Reading's Study Advice team. This tutorial is designed for you to go through at your own pace, and you can pause it at any time.

**Slide 1:** Students often see it as a good thing to get an exam paper ahead of time. There certainly can be some good points. For instance:

- It helps you to focus your preparation on the topic or topics you know you'll need to write on.
- It can reduce your anxiety – you won't be worrying about revising the wrong things.

**Slide 2:** However, there are things you need to watch out for

- It's very tempting to try and memorise an essay, but this can be disastrous
- You may be tempted to skimp on your preparation and revision – but if you're not thorough, you may make errors that you cannot correct.
- If you revise with your friends, you must be careful to avoid writing the same thing – or you could be accused of collusion which is a kind of academic misconduct.

**Slide 3:** There are three Ps you need to think about here: preparation, planning and practice. Let's start with some tips on preparation.

- First of all don't skimp... You need to read more than you think you are going to use to build a proper understanding of the topic.
- Start off by reading your question very thoughtfully.
- Read the whole question – don't just pick out key words.
- Think about what you already know and what you need to know and use this as a guide to plan your reading.

**Slide 4:** You also need to prepare for your research. This is where Super Librarian and all her librarian friends come in. For instance:

- Do you know how to find and access electronic resources like journal articles and ebooks off-campus during vacation?
- The Library has a whole page of tips – everything you need to know.
- You can find it here. Pause this tutorial now if you want to copy the URL.

**Slide 5:** The next P to think about is Planning – in this case, planning your answer. It's always important to plan what you're going to write, even in an exam. If you don't plan, you can waste time, miss important points, or end up rambling. Having a chance to plan before the exam gives you a chance to try out different ideas so it's really valuable.

Here's a quick way to plan your essay:

- First of all decide what your overall answer is.
- Then brainstorm all your ideas to find a way to group them together.
- Decide on three or four topics, themes or points
- Put them in a natural order to tell your 'story'
- And remember to be ruthless, if it doesn't fit you have to leave it out

**Slide 6:** The last P is again something you should always do when preparing for an exam – practise writing exam answers. The difference with a seen exam is that you know what the question is – but don't be tempted to try and memorise an essay. Get into the habit of writing about your topic and you won't need to memorise anything to write a great answer on the day.

- So start off by writing a draft essay, checking your notes as necessary
- Now try writing another draft to the time you will have in the exam
- Use the same plan but refer to your notes as little as possible and don't try to copy your previous essay.
- Now try writing an answer to time without referring to your notes at all.
- You can use this experience and practice to refine an essay plan for the exam room.

**Slide 7:** Finally there is one P that you must avoid - plagiarism. This can happen if you try to memorise a section of writing or a whole essay that you've worked on with friends. It's good to study with your fellow students – you all have something different to contribute to build understanding of your topic. But if you share writing, you may end up writing the same thing and being accused of collusion.

- Do discuss your reading with friends so that you can all build your understanding
- But avoid preparing the same essay, or dividing preparation between you.
- If your exam answers end up being very similar, you may be suspected of collusion.

**Summary:** So, to sum up, here are our tips for success.

- Firstly never try to memorise an essay
- Always read critically
- Don't just regurgitate the lecture notes... Do go beyond the reading list.
- Try JSTOR and Project Muse to find online journal articles off-campus.

If you follow these tips, your seen exam should be a breeze...