

# Exam Survival Checklist

*A brain-friendly guide for neurodivergent students*

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## Before the Exam (Preparation Phase)

- Study in short, realistic blocks (20–40 minutes)
- Plan rest as part of studying - recovery helps memory consolidate
- Use active recall (practice questions, summaries from memory)
- Externalize information (lists, mind maps, flashcards)
- Prepare sensory supports (earplugs, noise-cancelling headphones if allowed)
- Choose comfortable clothing with minimal sensory irritation
- Eat something steady (protein + complex carbs)
- Hydrate
- Get as much rest as possible - perfection is not required

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## The Day of the Exam

- Arrive early to reduce time pressure
- Ground your body before starting (slow breathing, feet on the floor)
- Remind yourself: *This exam measures performance under stress - not my worth*

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## During the Exam

- Start with questions that feel safest or most familiar
- If your mind blanks, pause and slow your breathing (long exhales)
- Use allowed movement or sensory regulation (posture shifts, pressure)
- Take micro-pauses instead of forcing through fatigue
- If overwhelmed, reorient: notice the room, your breath, your body
- Focus on clarity, not speed

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## If Cognitive Fatigue or Overload Appears

- Recognize it as a biological signal, not a failure
- Switch question types if possible
- Simplify: write key words first, then build answers
- Keep going gently - consistency beats force

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## After the Exam

- Eat and hydrate
- Allow decompression time before self-evaluation
- Avoid immediate rumination or self-criticism
- Rest your nervous system (quiet, low stimulation)

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## Remember

- You are not lazy - exams are neurologically demanding
- Needing supports does not mean needing less challenge
- One exam is one data point, not a definition
- Your brain deserves respect, not punishment

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### **Mindly Different**

Coaching for the beautifully different mind

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