



# **Webinar 13/10/2025: Extra Time and Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence***

***Course Tutor:  
Caroline Read***

PO Box 2652

Maidenhead SL6 8ZL

T: 0345 3311 492

E: [admin@communicate-ed.org.uk](mailto:admin@communicate-ed.org.uk)

W: [www.communicate-ed.org.uk](http://www.communicate-ed.org.uk)

# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

Course Tutor:

Caroline Read

Communicate-ed

Supporting special needs in education

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## Session Outcomes

**You will be able to:**

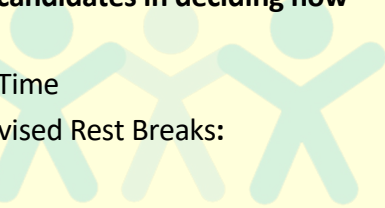
Support candidates in deciding how to use:

- Extra Time
- Supervised Rest Breaks:

**Produce:**

'Samples of Evidence' for Extra Time as required by JCQ

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## Increase in approved applications for 25% Extra Time over the last 10 years

Statistics published by Ofqual based on Access Arrangements Online approvals suggested that approved applications for 25% Extra Time were:

- 2016/17: 223,400 (15.7% of cohort)
- 2023/24: 419,960 (30.1%)

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Ofqual Statistical Releases

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## Statistics from AAO

In July 2025 Ofqual withdrew the published statistics for the years:

- 2014 through to
- 2024

They are reviewing the statistics and aim to republish in late 2025

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Ofqual Statistical Releases

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## Alternative arrangements

- It is important to consider and implement EAA that will prepare candidates for the workplace
- 25% Extra Time may not always be the most appropriate arrangement
- consider alternatives such as assistive technology, listening to music/white noise, Supervised Rest Breaks or a timer

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## 25% ET vs Supervised Rest Breaks

- No application through AAO for SRB
- SRB allow candidate to pause and regroup during the exam
- Time is added to the total exam time
- For some candidates, especially those who become mentally fatigued, rest breaks will be more beneficial than an extended exam session

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## 25% Extra Time: Samples of evidence for Forms 8 and 9

- A sample of internal tests/mock exams across relevant subjects showing the application of 25% Extra Time
- Comments and observations from teaching staff in relevant subjects as to why the candidate needs 25% extra time and how they use the Extra Time awarded

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## 25% Extra Time: Confirmation in Form 9 Part 1

Form 9 only, confirmation that:

- Supervised Rest Breaks have been trialled and exhausted
- 25% Extra Time is the most appropriate arrangement
- No other written evidence required

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## 25% ET vs Supervised Rest Breaks

Research/Literature reviews by:

- Jansen et al 2018  
<https://tinyurl.com/397svjev>
- Miller et al 2015  
<https://tinyurl.com/3exkt7yb>
- Pritchard et al 2016  
<https://tinyurl.com/4ucbnwpy>
- Allyson G. Harrison et al 2022  
<https://tinyurl.com/4u8mwsmm>

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## 25% ET vs Supervised Rest Breaks

Show that:

- No support exists to indicate that candidates with ADHD and mental health issues require Extra Time
- Some research suggests the reverse, i.e. more time increases stress levels
- They may, however benefit from:
  - a separate room
  - Supervised Rest Breaks

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## 25% ET vs Supervised Rest Breaks

Wood 2006 <https://tinyurl.com/yvyf4d5c>

- anxiety impairs the ability to concentrate on academic tasks
- requiring
  - breaks during tests
  - support to cope with feelings of anxiety
- 'test anxiety' not a recognised disability
- anxiety must manifest itself in other situations

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## 25% Extra Time in practice – challenges

For example:

- a standard 3-hour A-level exam becomes 3 hours 45 minutes
- two exams in one day, would mean over 7 hours in the exam hall
- can lead to increased exhaustion

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## 25% Extra Time in practice – advantages

When used well, can boost accuracy, clarity, and confidence

- Allows time to:
  - reread questions
  - proofread and check answers
  - improve structure in essays

Can lead to increase in exam quality – not just quantity

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## 25% Extra Time - purpose

Candidates need to understand the purpose and logistics of their Extra Time

- ensure students know *why* they have been granted Extra Time (i.e. based on their specific needs)
- will they start earlier or finish later than peers?
- will there still be time for a break between exams?

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## What is the purpose of the Extra Time?

- Extra Time should be the candidate's normal way of working, but they often need help in planning how to use the time effectively in an exam
- Consider underpinning difficulties and the reason for the Extra Time

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams:

## *Strategies and Evidence*

### Reading difficulties

- Difficulty understanding questions quickly?
- Re-reading needed to extract meaning from the rubric and question?

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### Improving reading speed

- Teach active reading strategies
  - skimming
  - scanning
- Review:
  - key words in the relevant subject
  - contract/command/action words: *compare, contrast, outline, explain*

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### Writing difficulties

- Slow handwriting
- Illegible handwriting
- Proof reading difficulties

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams:

## *Strategies and Evidence*

### Improving writing speed

#### Improving speed/legibility:

- handwriting programme
- use of Word Processor

#### Improving proofreading:

- candidate to their script read aloud
- where a scribe/speech to text software is approved, scribe/software to read script aloud

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### Processing/thinking difficulties

Reading and writing speed may be affected but can also be seen in:

- memory and recall
- working memory
- breaking down complex problems into smaller steps
- time management
- multistep tasks

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### Improving slow processing and thinking

#### Strategies to collect initial ideas:

- thought showers/brain dumps

#### Develop planning skills using:

- linear plan
- mindmap
- spidergram

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: Strategies and Evidence

## 25% Extra Time

At the beginning of an exam:

- scan the paper
- highlight questions to answer
- brain dump or sketch note
- get all important information on to page right at the start
- (this will reduce the cognitive load)

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## Writing Strategies

### Choose a Planning Format:

- **Storyboard:** narrative/descriptive writing
- **PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting):** discussion or argument-based questions
- **Mind map** Use for creative ideas
- **Flow Plan:** For experiments/sequenced content

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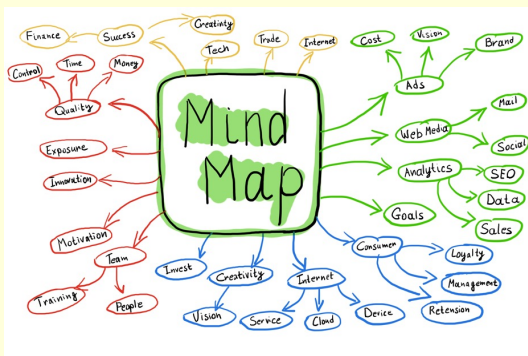
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## 25% Extra Time

### Planning Written Answers

- Many marks are lost due to misunderstanding or misreading the question

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## ACTION POINT

See Handout 1  
'Essay Wheel'  
in your Course Materials.

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## ACTION POINT

- Take a few moments to have a look through Handout 1.
- Numbered handouts are in your Course Materials, after the PP slides.

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## Pomodoro technique

Literally 'tomato' as Francesco Cirillo used a tomato shaped timer to track his work intervals

In this context 'an interval of work time'



Good for:

- study
- revision
- during an exam

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## Pomodoro technique

Good for ET and SRB:

1. Decide on the task to be done
2. Set the timer (typically 25 mins)
3. Work on the task
4. Take a short break when timer rings
5. Return to step 2. (repeat 4x)
6. After 4 pomodori, take a longer break
7. Return to step 2.

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## Plan the time – in advance

Note:

- the total minutes for the exam, including Extra Time
- start and finish times, including ET
- how many questions need to be answered
- what time to start each question

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## Plan the time – in advance

For example:

- exam time 2 hours
- plus 25% Extra Time = 30 minutes
- number of questions 4 (with equal marks)
- start time (e.g.) 9.30
- finish time (including Extra Time) 12.00

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## Plan the time – in advance

### Allow 10 minutes to:

- read paper at the beginning
- check script at the end
- Total time is 150 minutes minus 20 minutes for reading = 130 minutes
- Divided by 4 = approximately 30 minutes per question

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## Plan the time – in advance

- 9.30 Exam Starts – Read paper to select questions (10 minutes)
- 9.40 Question 1
- 10.10 Question 2
- 10.40 Question 3
- 11.10 Question 4
- 11.40 Read & check (also allows 10 'spare' minutes)

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## 25% Extra Time

- Review answers after each question
  - Take a short break between questions to:
    - stretch
    - do breathing exercises
    - sip water
    - eat small snacks (banana or chocolate, if allowed)
- to help maintain energy

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## 25% Extra Time

### Pacing/tracking the time

- Start with easy questions
- Leave hard questions and return later
- Clock at the front of the room
- Watches are not permitted
- Digital or analogue timer on candidate's desk, sand timer or stopwatch

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## 25% Extra Time

### Review and Refine:

- Use Extra Time at the end to:
  - Reread instructions
  - Check calculations or spelling
  - Ensure clarity in essays

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## 25% Extra Time

### Practice Under Timed Conditions:

- Simulate exams with Extra Time
- Get used to pacing and reviewing
- Build confidence
- Practice makes efficient use of extra time automatic

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## 25% Extra Time

### Mental and Physical Prep:

- Stay calm: breathing techniques help
- Stay focused: avoid distractions
- Take short pauses to refresh your mind

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## 25% Extra Time

### At the end of an exam:

- Memorise a checklist for:
    - proof reading, e.g. **COPS**  
Capitals: Omissions: Punctuation: Spelling
    - checking work
- that can be used in at the end of an exam

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## 25% Extra Time

### Running out of time?

- Write in bullet points
- Leave space to come back to unfinished answers
- Write something for every question

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

On the screen:

Handout 2 in your course materials:  
'Tips for students with extra time in exams'

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On the screen:

Handout 3 in your course materials:  
'Exam Strategy'

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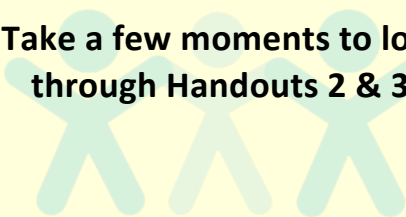
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## ACTION POINT

- Take a few moments to look through Handouts 2 & 3.

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## 25% Extra Time: Samples of evidence for Forms 8 and 9

- A sample of internal tests/mock exams across relevant subjects showing the application of 25% Extra Time

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## Showing ET in a Test/Mock paper

- Changing pen colour to show how ET has been used, i.e. additional marks gained
- Change to a very different colour – e.g. green (not black to blue)

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## Showing ET in a Test/Mock paper

- Mark in another different colour showing:
  - grade/marks/percentage in set time
  - with additional time added
- Recording clearly will help the inspector to see that the ET was used successfully

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams:

## *Strategies and Evidence*

### Showing ET in a Test/Mock paper

- Black: set time
- Green: use of extra time
- Red: teacher marking
- 54 marks in set time, Grade B
- 60 marks in total time, Grade A
- Additional marks in extra time: 6

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### Showing ET in a Test/Mock paper

- Quality rather than quantity
- If relevant, simple annotation on the script showing where marks have been gained e.g:
  - spellings have been corrected
  - more questions answered
- Signed by subject teacher

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### On the screen:

Sample mock papers:

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams:

## *Strategies and Evidence*

### ACTION POINT

- Find sample mock papers using Extra Time at:
- <https://www.communicate-ed.org.uk/et-sample-evidence>
- Password ETEvidence (case sensitive)
- Take a few moments to look through them.

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### Showing ET in a Test/Mock paper

When a candidate is word processing answers they may:

- go back to edit answers
- jump to different places in the paper
- default is that font and colour will match the existing text
- need to change font/colour each time
- this wastes time, may not remember

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### Showing ET in a Test/Mock paper

Alternatively:

- save the exam script at the end of set time
- pre-agree the title of the document (e.g. name/subject v1)
- then save again at the end of the ET (e.g. name/subject v2)
- allow candidate to highlight additional text (completed in extra time) at the end

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## Showing ET in a Test/Mock paper

- Some students may be able to use 'Track changes' to demonstrate how they used the extra time

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## Recording evidence on the use of extra time in a timed assessment

- Marks in set time
- Marks in extra time
- Increase in marks/grade
- How was the extra time used?
- Consider adding student comments
- Subject teacher to sign/date

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## Formats for recording teacher evidence

### AAC to keep a scan/copy of:

- the front page of the test/mock paper (not the entire paper!)
- a cover sheet
- a subject teacher proforma
- a scanned extract/screen print/digital record from a timed online test/mock exam

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams:

## *Strategies and Evidence*

### Supervised Rest Breaks

For candidates whose difficulty is recognised/established in the centre:

- cognition and learning needs
- communication and interaction needs
- medical condition
- sensory & physical needs
- social, emotional & mental health needs

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### Supervised Rest Breaks

- The candidate's difficulties must be established within the centre known to e.g. Form Tutor, Head of Year, SENCo, AAC, senior member of pastoral staff
- SRB on Form 8 if ET/Scribe required for LDs, otherwise Form 9
- Specialist evidence of a disability is not required for inspection, only Form 8/9
- No samples of evidence required

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### Supervised Rest Breaks

- A few candidates may require Supervised Rest Breaks and 25% Extra Time

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

**On the screen:**

**Handout 4 in your course materials:  
Page from the AARA**

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## **ACTION POINT**

- Take a few moments to look through Handout 4.

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## **Supervised Rest Breaks**

**Rest breaks take place:**

- in the exam room
- outside if supervised at all times
- Accompanied by an invigilator if leaving the room
- Add time taken to the end of the exam
- Break not normally required within the first 10 minutes

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## Supervised Rest Breaks

- SENCo/AAC to consider in advance number/duration of breaks so that staff available to support
- Should normally be no more than 30 minutes
- For most medical conditions 30 minutes should be sufficient
- Many candidates will only need 10 minutes

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## Supervised Rest Breaks

- Epilepsy, Narcolepsy, other illnesses which cause seizures, might be longer
- Has to be workable

If the candidate e.g. has a seizure and they are still out when the exam ends

- stop the exam and apply for Spec Con

If they come round during the time of the exam

- continue with the paper

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## What to Do During a Break

**There is no access to the paper during the break:**

- have a drink of water, eat snack
- take a walk
- close eyes, breathe deeply, focus on breathing
- stretch arms, shoulders, neck
- go to the toilet

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams:

## *Strategies and Evidence*

### What to Do During a Break

- clear mind, focus on a happy thought, a positive memory
- doodle (centres may now provide paper for doodling – must be sent to examiner inside the candidate's paper)
- visualisation
- use fidget toys and stress balls

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### Visualisation techniques

**When stressed, the body releases adrenaline which shuts down higher thinking brain. Candidates need to:**

- trigger positive emotions through visualisation
- think of a happy/proud memory (e.g. winning a prize, a holiday, a pet)

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### Visualisation techniques

- breathe deeply, replay the memory
- releases 'happy hormones'
- helps brain calm down/think clearly again
- practise regularly so it can be used when under pressure

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## Fidget Toys & Stress Balls



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## Purpose of Rest Breaks

- The purpose of a Supervised Rest Breaks is for a break from the exam and should not be seen as 'thinking time'

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## How can Rest Breaks help?

### Why Rest Breaks Matter:

- Rest breaks can reduce mental fatigue
- Improve concentration and recall
- Help manage exam anxiety
- Increase overall performance

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

## Supervised Rest Breaks

### How to Use Rest Breaks Wisely:

- **Plan ahead:** Know when you might need breaks
- **Relax your mind:** Deep breathing, gentle stretching
- **Avoid distractions:** Don't be distracted by other people
- **Don't forget to take a break!**

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## Supervised Rest Breaks

### Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- Taking breaks too frequently
- Using break time to worry about questions
- Skipping breaks and burning out

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## Practising Rest Breaks

### Candidates should:

- try using rest breaks during mock exams
- learn what works best for them

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

On the screen:

Handout 5 in your course materials:  
'FAQs'.

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FAQs about ET Samples of evidence  
and SRB:

- <https://tinyurl.com/mv34x536>
- Communicate-ed member's page
- Membership is £15 year
- Free for the first year
- [www.communicate-ed.org.uk/new-members](http://www.communicate-ed.org.uk/new-members)

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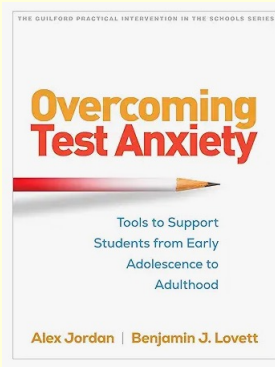
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<https://tinyurl.com/2mwwwhrv>

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# Extra Time & Rest Breaks in Exams: *Strategies and Evidence*

**On the screen:**



**Examples from 'Informal Assessment Resources'**

- 'SRB Student feedback'
- 'Teacher evidence that ET used effectively'

**For sale through the Communicate-ed shop – all proceeds go direct to our charitable trust.**

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## **Thanks to:**

Brenda Ferrie: Tips for Extra Time

Holly Bolt: Pomodoro technique

Claire Thomas: Sample paper

Sean Taver: Sample Paper

Emma Sadler: WP with ET

Annie McMillan: SRB

Okje Smith: SRB student feedback, ET teacher feedback forms

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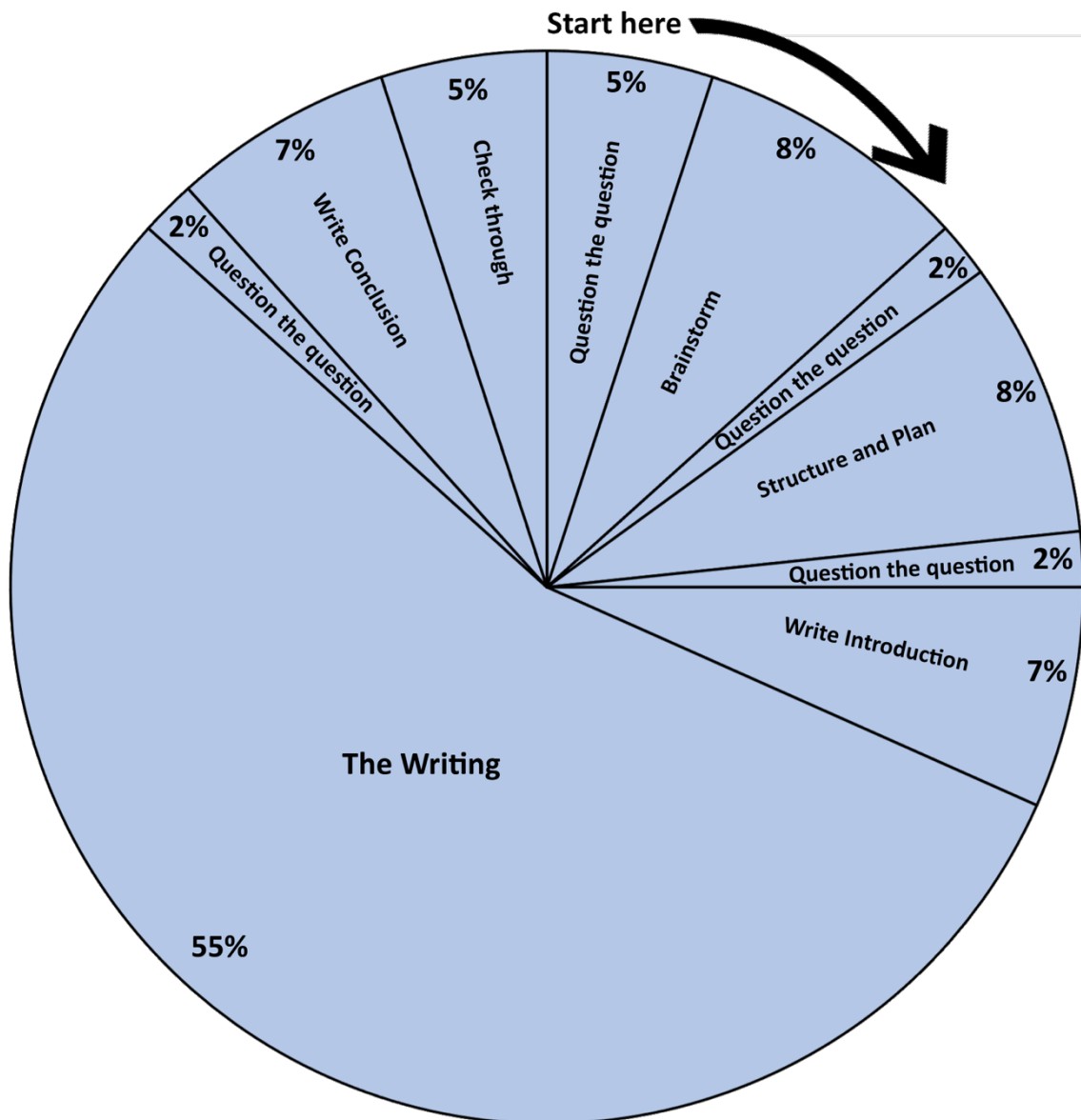
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# Essay wheel



### Tips for Students with Extra Time in Examinations

Extra time is an Access Arrangement which is approved by the JCQ upon an application from the school with evidence of one below average and one low average score on a standardised test for cognitive functions related to speed of processing including writing speed, working memory or speed of information recall or fluency as well as a documented history of need and normal way of working.

The history should therefore start to be compiled by the SEND department when difficulties are first noticed and teachers are responsible for putting in place the reasonable adjustment in class and for exams so that it becomes the student's normal way of working. The student may not need extra time in all subjects.

The JCQ now encourages schools to properly consider whether a rest break may be more appropriate than extra time. The arrangement for a student to take a rest break does not need to be applied for through JCQ and is sometimes a better option than extra time by giving the student a break in the exam to recompose themselves. Time taken for rest breaks is added onto the exam time so in effect the student is still taking the same amount of time to complete the exam.

Extra time which is normally 25% and is additional to the time of the exams. It has to be applied for through the JCQ. Having extra time can make exams quite long for student for example, extra time on a 3 hour A level exams is 45 minutes. If a student is unfortunate enough to have two such exams in one day (this does happen) they could be in the exam room for 7 hours 30 minutes!

If not used properly, extra time could make students even more tired. But used properly, it can help them to pace themselves as well as compensate for difficulties.

Students tend to need extra time for the following reasons:

- Slow handwriting
- Needing to re read questions several times to understand what is being asked
- Working memory issues with the transfer of ideas to paper so planning is important to ensure that they stick to the question  
Proof reading
- Lack of automaticity in the recall of information from long term memory
- Time to recompose themselves between questions (but rest breaks would be preferable)

#### **Some guidelines to help students use the time effectively:**

Make sure that the student knows why they need extra time – see above.

Make sure that the student knows whether they are starting earlier than the other students or finishing later. The person organising the exams needs to coordinate these times otherwise students may end up finishing later and starting earlier without a good break in between exams that may fall on the same day.

Make sure that the student knows how to plan the use of their extra time as time management is one of the issues that students find most difficult and why they tend to run out of time.

### 1. Plan your time in an Exam

- ✓ Note total the number of minutes for the whole exam (including the extra time)
- ✓ Note when the exam is to start and when it is to finish (including extra time)
- ✓ Note how many questions need to be answered
- ✓ Note what time you will start each question
- ✓ Try to prepare this in advance

For example:

- ✓ Exam time 2 hours , number of questions 4 of equal marks
- ✓ 25% extra time = 30 minutes
- ✓ Start time 1.30
- ✓ Finish time (with extra time) 4.00
- ✓ Allow:
  - 10 minutes to read exam paper at the beginning
  - 10 minutes to check script at the end
- ✓ Total time is 150 minutes minus 20 minutes (for reading as above) = 130 minutes, divided by 4 = approximately 30 minutes per question.

1.30 Exam Starts – Read paper to select questions (10 minutes)  
1.40 Question 1  
2.15 Question 2  
2.45 Question 3  
3.10 Question 4  
3.40 Read & check (also allows 10 minutes for contingencies)

Students often know how long a question *should* be, but they forget what time they started. This makes the above planning very important. If they start to run out of time, students should record their answers in note form and leave a space in case they are able to come back to it at the end. It is better to do 4 questions, some of which is in note (bullet point) form than 3 complete questions.

### 2. Pace the Exam:

- ✓ Look back over your answer at the end of each question rather than leave it all to the end
- ✓ Take a few minutes break at the end of each question to have a drink of water, stretch, completely clear your mind by focusing on something which makes you feel happy, breath in for five and out for five, five times with eyes closed, have a banana or piece of chocolate (if permitted)

### 3. Plan a Written Answer

Most marks are lost because the student has not understood the question or because they run out of time. Most students say they don't have time in an exam to plan their answers. We say that students, especially dyslexic students, cannot afford NOT to plan.

- Most students should think and plan for about 30% of the total exam time and write for the remaining 70%.
- A dyslexic student should plan for 40% of the time and write for 60% because answers have to be even more carefully thought out so that the information is presented in a succinct way.

Typical dyslexic characteristics are a weakness with sequencing and working memory and therefore, without planning they can easily diverge from the point because they have “lost their way”. Planning also helps dyslexic students recall facts and dates which should be

noted in the plan. Retrieval of facts can become more difficult when they also have to structure sentences and process other information at the same time.

Writing an answer requires the skills of the author (ideas and information) and the secretary (spelling, syntax, grammar, sentences). The dyslexic student will find difficulty with carrying out these two distinct operations simultaneously. Either the ideas or the presentation and spelling will be compromised. Therefore they need to approach each answer in stages.

#### 1. Generate Ideas:

- ✓ Read the question carefully and highlight “contract words” (compare, contrast, describe outline). What am I being asked?
- ✓ Highlight key or topic words (Romans, Shakespearean characters)
- ✓ Visualise your brain-frame to find the information you need

#### 2. Note your ideas in a plan.

Planning not only ensures that all the necessary information is retrieved appropriately and sequenced in the right order, it also helps the student manage their time and rest. For example if there are 4 "boxes" or ideas to address in 24 minutes, then each will take about 6 minutes. It is even more helpful if the student can equate the number of lines they would normally write in that time – e.g. 6 minutes means approximately four lines. They will then be visually able to see how much they have to write.

There are various different types of plans.

##### *Story Board plan.*

Used for descriptive or narrative answers.

*Divide a sheet of paper into vertically down the middle, and horizontally across to make boxes. Each box represents a paragraph.*

*Note ideas in each box with the first box being the introduction and the last being the conclusion. This is very useful for the dyslexic student who may tend to work backwards from the end or generate ideas in a random order*

##### *PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting) Plan.*

Used for argumentative or discursive answers.

*Divide page into columns representing positive and negative views and evidence or ideas*

##### *Brainstorm Plan.*

*Put the main idea in the middle and other ideas around.*

*Number the ideas in sequence*

##### *Flow Plan.*

Used for writing up experiments or a specific sequence of events.

#### 4. Control Stress, Panic and Tiredness.

- ✓ Rest between written answers
- ✓ Drink water - a dehydrated brain will work more slowly and you will feel more tired
- ✓ Ask if you can take a banana or piece of chocolate into the exam

- ✓ Avoid fizzy drinks, crisps and other types of fatty foods before an exam. (They will make you sleepy). Eat protein, cereals, fruit
- ✓ Ask not to sit by a window - it can be hot: bright light tends to make dyslexic students more tired
- ✓ Between questions do a few exercises such as rotating your shoulders, neck and ankles, arching your back and deep breathing. Sitting in the same position for a long time can restrict oxygen intake and make you tired. Be careful that they do not distract other students
- ✓ Before writing anything down, close your eyes and visualise the answer. You will retrieve information more easily if you are relaxed. Try to visualise your books and notes as well as the room where you revised
- ✓ If you start to panic because you don't know the answer, start to breathe for 5 counts in and 5 counts out; close your eyes and find your positive experience \* or take yourself into an imaginary "safe place" – a beautiful beach for example. Once you start to relax your thinking processes will start to work again. The more you force yourself to remember something, the more stressed you will become and the less you will remember. Try holding the back of your neck with one hand and massage your forehead with the other – it will help anchor your thoughts
- ✓ If you start to fall behind your time plan, record your answers in note form or leave some space to come back to
- ✓ Don't engage in post mortems. It is not helpful - what is done is done, move on to the next exam

This information sheet is prepared by Brenda Ferrie. [brenda@trainthebrain.co.uk](mailto:brenda@trainthebrain.co.uk)

\*The Power of Visualisation When you become stressed, adrenaline is released into the body, the higher thinking brain closes down and you go into "fight or flight" mood and you cannot think properly. This perpetuates the feeling of panic. To 'reverse' this automatic reaction, you need to generate a 'positive thought' which becomes a feeling (e.g. recalling a time when you won a competition, when you were given a present you really wanted or being given a puppy, when you succeeded in a certain sport....anything that makes you relive that wonderful, "WOW" feeling). This releases DHEA, "the happy hormone" into your system and causes certain physiological changes in the body. Your higher thinking brain will start to work again and you will start to feel calm and positive. Practice thinking your special thought, visualise it, feel it so that you can "switch it on" at anytime when you are under pressure. Breathe 5 counts in and 5 counts out at the same time.

### Exam Strategy

PANIC is a common response to the word exam. To cope with this response, it is important to feel in control. You need a strategy.

#### What you need to know:

1. When is the exam? (Write the date and time in your year planner)
2. What kind of exam is it? (essay? multiple choice? short answers?)
3. How long is the exam?
4. How many questions are there?
5. Do all the questions have to be answered or is there a choice?
6. How many questions have to be answered in each section?
7. Do all the questions carry an equal number of marks?
8. How long will it take to read the exam paper?

By knowing how long the paper will take to read, and allowing five minutes for proof reading, you can then work out how much time is left and how long you can spend on each question.

#### The day before:

Hopefully you will have covered all your revision by now.

1. Check the contents of your pencil case. Have you a back-up pen, cartridges, different kinds of pencils or coloured pens, highlighter, ruler etc?
2. If you use a fountain pen put a new cartridge in now.
3. Double check the time and place of the exam.
4. Read through your revision notes but don't work too late.
5. Get some fresh air, don't stay inside all day.
6. Have an early night even if you can't get to sleep straight away.

#### On the day:

1. Get up in plenty of time.
2. Eat some breakfast, even if it is only fruit or toast.
3. Check that you have all your equipment.
4. Get to the place where your exam is in plenty of time.
5. Don't be put off by other students who are panicking or getting upset.
6. Go to the toilet.

### At the start of the exam:

1. Listen to the instructions carefully.
2. Read the instructions carefully – how many questions from each section?
3. If there is a choice, read all the questions first.
  - ✓ those you could do
  - x those you definitely can't answer
  - ? those you are not sure aboutDecide which question to do first – choose the easiest.
4. If you can't find a question you can answer, see if there is one with three or four sections. You might be able to answer one or two of them, so you will pick up some marks.
5. If you are running out of time and can't get the last answer finished, make sure you have made a plan containing all of the important main points on your answer booklet. You may pick up some extra marks.
6. Try to leave time for proof reading at the end.

### After the exam:

If you can avoid it, don't compare answers with your friends. You can't change anything now, so there is no point.

Do something nice – you deserve it!

### JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

#### 5.1 Supervised Rest Breaks

Where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty, the SENCo **must** have trialled and exhausted the option of supervised rest breaks through timed internal tests and/or mock examinations before making an application for 25% extra time.

Supervised rest breaks are often more effective and appropriate than 25% extra time for candidates who experience anxiety or attention difficulties. They may better address the needs of neurodivergent candidates such as those with ADHD, ASD as well as those with a medical condition and mental health needs. For a candidate who tires easily or struggles to concentrate over an extended period, supervised rest breaks will be more appropriate than 25% extra time.

Allocating extra time simply extends the period a candidate must remain in a potentially stressful environment, which can intensify anxiety and reduce productivity. Moreover, 25% extra time may not address the underlying issue, which is often related to difficulties with attention or emotional regulation. In contrast, supervised rest breaks allow the candidate to step away from the exam setting, use structured self-regulation strategies, and return when they are calm and better able to focus. This targeted approach can lead to more effective exam performance while also supporting the development of long-term self-management skills. Teaching candidates how to use these strategies equips them to advocate for themselves in further education or the workplace, fostering independence and resilience.



### **Do you need evidence on file that you have informed candidates of their AAO application?**

The data consent form is no longer in use and you need to inform candidates of the AAO application – this can be verbally, you don't need to record anything for inspection purposes.

### **Do you need evidence on file that supervised rest breaks have been 'trialled and exhausted' before applying for 25% extra time (for candidates with an impairment other than a learning difficulty)?**

If supervised rest breaks have been trialled and it is decided that they are not appropriate for the candidate, you do not need to keep specific evidence of this on file. In Part 1 of Form 9 you would explain that supervised rest breaks were trialled but proved to be ineffective and not appropriate to the candidate's needs. This would be supported by the teacher feedback, but you don't need specific evidence showing when and where they were trialled (for example).

### **Do you need samples of evidence for 25% extra time for GCSE resit candidates?**

For GCSE resits, you don't need to have samples of evidence for 25% extra time if you have an existing Form 8 or 9. The AARA says:

*Where a candidate is entered for GCSE examinations in the November 2025 or June 2026 examination series to improve upon a previous grade, the SENCo may use an existing, fully completed, Form 8 or Form 9. Samples of additional evidence (comments and observations from teaching staff or mock exam papers showing the application of extra time) **are not** required.*

### **Do you need to have samples on evidence on file before the candidate is assessed?**

You don't need to have the test sample(s) before the candidate is assessed (in the case of Form 8) – these can be added to the file later on, but should be available before the AAO application is put through.

The other evidence requirement is teacher comments and feedback on why the candidate needs 25% extra time and how they use it (for example, to have longer to read the questions, to go back over and check their spellings/proof read their work, to get more written etc). You will have been gathering this in previous years as it was the substance of what you put into Part 1 of Form 8/9, the difference this year is that you need to both summarise this in Part 1 of Form 8/9 (as you were doing previously), and also keep the feedback/comments on file for inspection.

## What are some examples of acceptable assessment evidence?

Any of the following examples would be acceptable evidence towards meeting the requirement for 'a sample of internal school tests/mock exam papers across relevant subjects showing the application of 25% extra time':

- the front page of the test/mock paper (not the entire paper!)
- a cover sheet
- a subject teacher proforma
- a scanned extract/screen print/digital record from a timed online test/mock exam

This document would show:

- Marks in set time
- Marks in extra time
- Increase in marks/grade
- How was the extra time used?
- (Consider adding student comments)
- Subject teacher to sign/date

Please note – the information provided on this document must relate to an existing internal test or mock exam paper which can be accessed and shown to the JCQ Inspector where requested.

The sample of evidence doesn't have to come from a mock exam, it can be a timed test in class (for example, a 30 minute assessment would be fine).

Changing the pen colour is a good way of the tutor seeing how the extra time has been used.

Or for those using a word processor, you could change the font or text colour. Saving it at the end of the normal time and then the extra time as a different file name would also work, as would using the 'track changes' function.

Some colleagues have been surprised by this requirement, but it is important to be aware that:

- Part 1 of Form 8 and 9 in 24/25 both referred to the impact on tests/examinations for candidates, so using evidence from internal tests/mocks should have been part of evidence gathering previously, the difference this year is that you need to keep evidence on file for inspection.
- JCQ centres should be keeping samples of internal tests/mocks for contingency purposes anyway. As the Ofqual 'Guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system' (<https://tinyurl.com/2j66nwje>) states:

'Student work, either the original or a copy, must always be retained by the centre. Student work can be retained digitally or physically. Students may be given copies, or the original work, where this would support their study.'

- The JCQ 'General Regulations for Approved Centres' (<https://tinyurl.com/5het2apb>) also states:

‘In the unlikely event that the government determines that examinations cannot go ahead, centres will need evidence of candidate assessment performance, such as mock examinations, to enable alternative methods of awarding grades.’

### **How many pieces of evidence need to be on file for 25% extra time?**

If the candidate is only studying one subject, our understanding is that one timed test sample is sufficient.

If the candidate will be given 25% extra time across several GCSE subjects, then three pieces of assessment evidence would be sufficient – one from Science or Maths, one from a subject with extended writing (for example English, History, Religious Studies) and one from another subject area (for example MFL). You wouldn’t need a sample from every subject.

For an A-level candidate you would need one piece of assessment evidence per A-level subject.

The assessment evidence should be current – i.e. relating to their GCSE studies for GCSE candidates, or their A-level studies for A-level candidates.

### **When should I put through the AAO application?**

Historically we have encouraged centres to think about starting applications in year 9, but this is likely to be less relevant now that we need papers/tests showing ET in use before an AAO application is made. We are told that these papers need to relate to GCSE study. You could start work on the paperwork during year 9, but may not be in a position to make the actual application through AAO during year 9 because you don’t have the papers.

Having said that, some centres start their GCSE courses in year 9, in which case a paper from year 9 would be relevant. So it wouldn’t be appropriate to rule out the option of making an application towards the end of year 9 in some cases (after April – so as not to fall foul of the 26 months approval running from the date of application to the exams in year 11).

The AARA now tells us:

‘Schools should be able to process applications at the start of or during the first year of a two-year GCSE course, having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working during Years 7 to 9.’

### **I am concerned I won’t meet the October application deadline for the January exam series. What can I do?**

For qualifications with October deadlines (e.g. BTECs), a short in-class test, annotated with a note on the application of extra time (as suggested above), is sufficient. AAO will still accept applications made after the published deadline of 21 October.