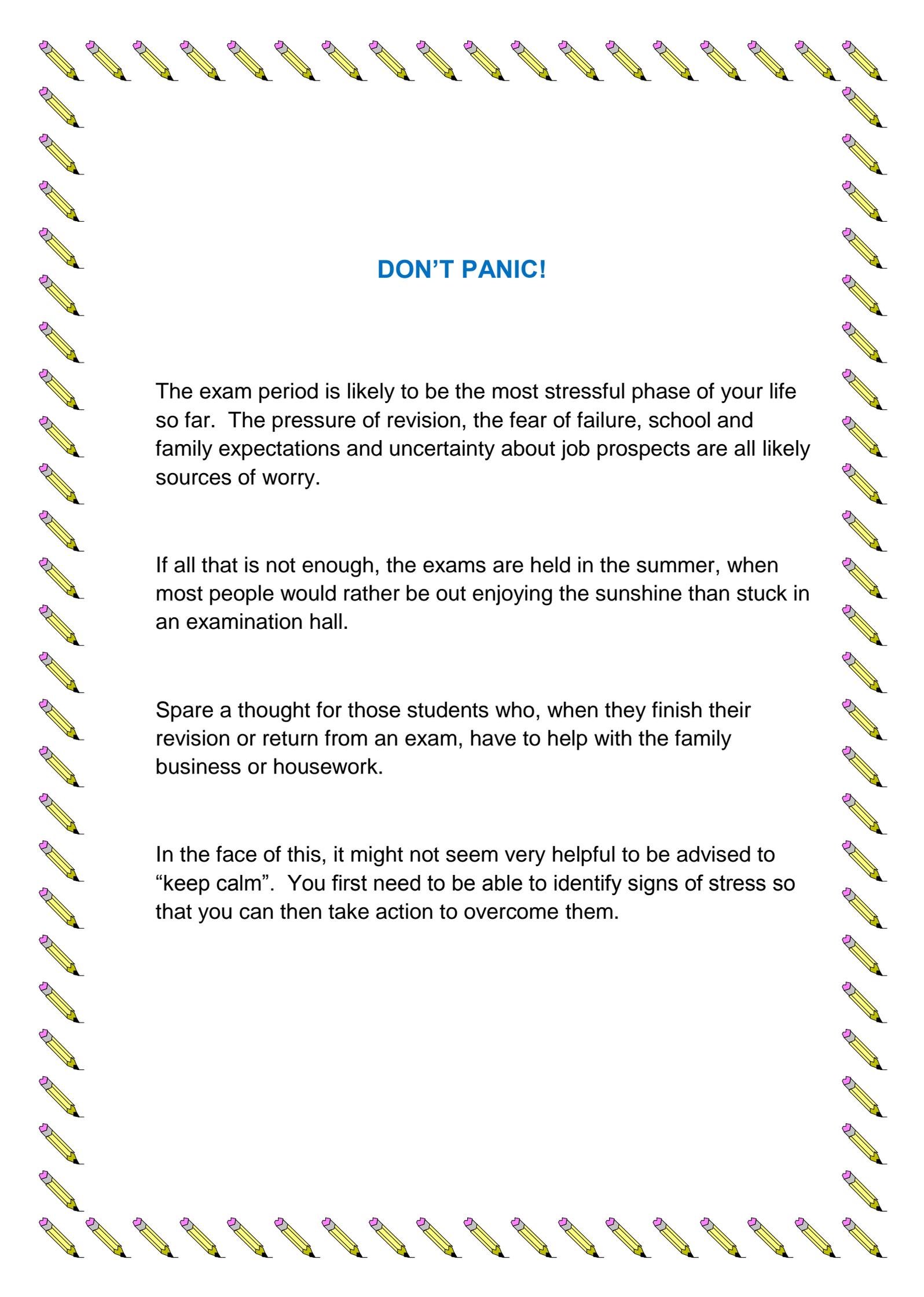


**Help!**



**How do I  
survive  
exams?**



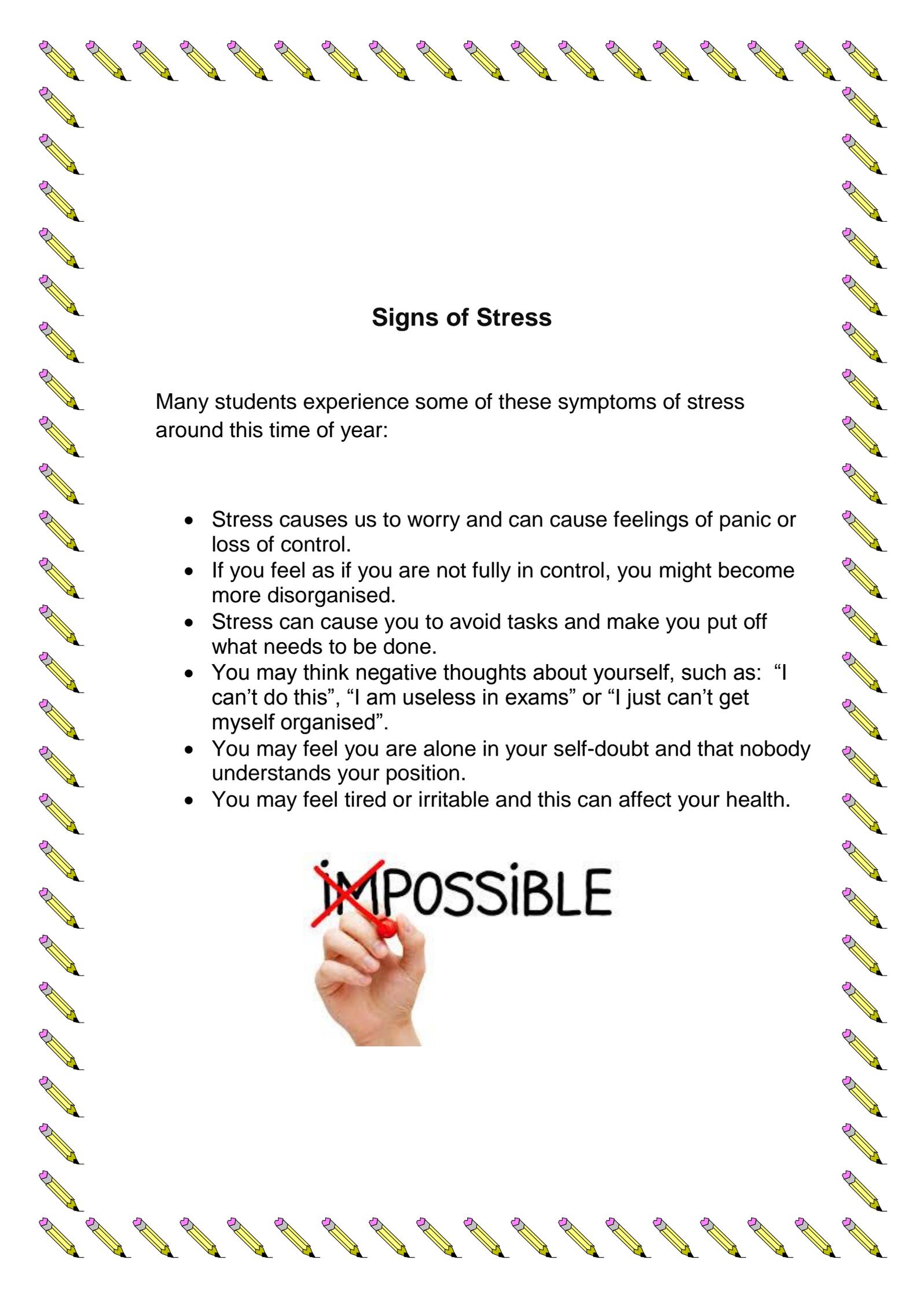
## DON'T PANIC!

The exam period is likely to be the most stressful phase of your life so far. The pressure of revision, the fear of failure, school and family expectations and uncertainty about job prospects are all likely sources of worry.

If all that is not enough, the exams are held in the summer, when most people would rather be out enjoying the sunshine than stuck in an examination hall.

Spare a thought for those students who, when they finish their revision or return from an exam, have to help with the family business or housework.

In the face of this, it might not seem very helpful to be advised to “keep calm”. You first need to be able to identify signs of stress so that you can then take action to overcome them.



## Signs of Stress

Many students experience some of these symptoms of stress around this time of year:

- Stress causes us to worry and can cause feelings of panic or loss of control.
- If you feel as if you are not fully in control, you might become more disorganised.
- Stress can cause you to avoid tasks and make you put off what needs to be done.
- You may think negative thoughts about yourself, such as: “I can’t do this”, “I am useless in exams” or “I just can’t get myself organised”.
- You may feel you are alone in your self-doubt and that nobody understands your position.
- You may feel tired or irritable and this can affect your health.





## How To Cope

- Organise your time productively. Identify your strengths and weaknesses as a learner by listing them. Develop ways to overcome the weaknesses.
- Recognise that a vague, general feeling of anxiety might really just spring from worrying about one or two subjects. Identify those worries and try to tackle their causes.
- Talk about any worries you have with a friend, parent, teacher etc. Talking about anxieties DOES help to relieve tension and clears the way for practical solutions.
- If you feel yourself becoming tense, employ a breathing or relaxation exercise regularly. For example, sit in a quiet room, relax your face and shoulders, and take long, deep breaths in and out. Do this before a revision session and afterwards too.
- When you've done your study session, relax by forgetting about work and playing music or a sport, by watching television or doing an activity, such as a hobby, that helps you to take your mind off revision and exams. Physical exercise is an excellent way of feeling better. It's down to the serotonin.
- Sleep for at least eight hours at night. Have a balanced, healthy diet. Avoid drinking coffee, which can cause stress and stomach cramps.
- Try to keep everything in perspective.

## ON THE BIG DAY!

### Before the Exams

- Be sure you know exactly where and when each paper of each exam is being held.
- Remember your examining board, centre number and candidate number. Bring your exam slip with you every time.
- Arrive for each paper 10 minutes early (in full school uniform). You can be disqualified for lateness.
- Bring all the necessary equipment. You are likely to need a combination of black or blue pens, two plain pencils and colouring pencils, sharpener, rubber, compasses, protractor, calculator and batteries, a reliable watch, a bottle of water, tissues and (if you need them) spectacles.
  - If you suffer from hay fever or any other persistent medical problems, seek advice from your doctor. Remember: some painkillers (e.g. for painful periods) can cause drowsiness.



## Final Moments



There are various things to do before you start the actual exam.

- Listen carefully to the invigilator's instructions.
- Fill in your exam paper fully and accurately, making sure the exam is the one you are meant to be taking.
- Be sure about the number of questions you have to answer and check if there are compulsory questions.
- Plan your time carefully. Too many students do not finish some questions or do not answer some of them at all. Give each essay question the same amount of time.
- Remember to leave time at the end to read through all your answers to check for mistakes.

## Orals



Orals can be more nerve-wracking than written exams because they take place in front of teachers, friends and even moderators.

In foreign language exams, you should have rehearsed a number of possible situations such as conversations about your family or what you do in your free time, based on previous oral exams. You will have to comment and answer questions on these situations, and learn basic phrases and words that will help.

To make this revision more enjoyable, active and useful, try to work with a friend or relative, preferably one who has taken a foreign language exam already. Tape-recording what you say can help you to evaluate your performance and identify the areas that need improving. It will also improve your pronunciation.

Careful listening techniques are needed and it will help if you listen to the radio in the foreign language for 10-15 minutes each day, in the bath or anywhere.

Lots of this advice came from *The Guardian* newspaper.

Try these links for more interesting ideas about revision and activities to try:

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/mortarboard/2012/nov/06/how-your-brain-likes-to-revise>

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jan/08/five-secrets-of-successful-revising>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/>



Go to our school website for an electronic copy of this guide to revision:

<http://www.cheney.oxon.sch.uk/>

Speak to your teachers and look up department sections on the school website for more information.