

NCEA Study Timetable

A 4-week plan to get ready, then a weekly plan until your last exam. Testing yourself, spreading study over days and good sleep are backed by research. The block times are a starting point, so adjust them to suit you.

Exam dates

Tue 10 Nov – Fri 4 Dec 2026

Exams start at 9:30am or 2:00pm. No exams on Fri 13 Nov or Mon 30 Nov. Your own exams are on your NZQA admission slip, or log in to NZQA to see them. Sitting Cambridge or IB? Ask your school for your dates. The rest of the plan still works.

Study block

25 min work · 5 min break

Or 50 min work, 10 min break. After about 90 minutes, take a longer break of 15 minutes or more.

Bedtime

My lights-out: _____

Sleep 8–10 hours. Get up at the same time every day. Stop study and screens 1 hour before bed. No caffeine in the 6 hours before bed.

How to use this plan

1. Copy your exams from your NZQA admission slip into **My exams**. Then plan your week on page 3. Print a new week each Sunday.
2. Start each block by testing yourself for 5 minutes, with no notes. Then do one task you can finish, like 5 questions marked.
3. Study each subject 2 or 3 times a week. Don't leave more than 4 days between them. As an exam gets closer, give that subject more.
4. Keep one spare slot each day. If you miss a block, move it there. Don't do double tomorrow.
5. Your bedtime and phone rule are part of the plan. Stick to them.

Good ways to study

Past-paper questions · practice questions · flashcards you check yourself · explaining it out loud · mixed questions (maths and science, from week 2) · drawing it from memory, then checking.

Rereading and highlighting help you get to know a topic, but on their own they don't help you remember much. After reading, close your notes and see what you can explain or answer.

A school day could look like this

4:00 block 1 · 5 min break · block 2 (hardest subject) · 15 min break, move around · block 3 · spare slot if needed · dinner · 7:30 test yourself on a weak topic for 25 min · stop by 8:30 · screens off 1 hour before bed

My exams

Subject and level	Date	9:30 or 2:00	Exam help (SAC)

Exam help is called Special Assessment Conditions (SAC). It can mean a reader, a writer, a computer, rest breaks, extra time or a separate room. Your school applies for it. Some deadlines have passed, but help for health conditions, including anxiety, can still be applied for. Ask your school this week what's possible, and check your help is set up for each exam.

A study-leave day could look like this

Get up at your usual time · 9:30 easy flashcards · 10:00 two hard blocks · long break, move · 12:00 two blocks · lunch · 2:00 two blocks of mixed past-paper questions · spare slot · evening test-yourself · about 4 hours of study is a good start. Adjust it to what you need

NCEA Study Timetable



Exam calendar: write your exams in

The shaded days are the exam weeks. Write each exam on its day, with 9:30 or 2:00. No exams on Fri 13 Nov or Mon 30 Nov. When your school tells you when study leave starts, mark it here. Add portfolio, performance and other due dates too. Your school's deadline may be earlier than NZQA's.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
12 Oct	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1 Nov
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 Exams start	11	12	13 No exams	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 No exams	1 Dec	2	3	4 Last exam day	5	6

Three stages

Weeks 1–2: practise every topic once. Mark each one red, amber or green (page 4). **Weeks 3–4:** go back to red and amber topics. Do mixed past-paper questions. **After that, until your last exam:** keep planning week by week. In the week before each exam, do timed practice at the same time of day as the exam. In the last 2 days, mostly light revision.

When to come back to a topic

Come back after 1 to 3 days. Then after about a week. Then once more in the week before that exam. Test yourself on each topic at least 3 times, on different days. If a topic doesn't fit on its day, do it later, not earlier.

This week: 25-minute blocks, 5-minute breaks

In each block, write the subject, the topic and what you'll do. Example: "Chemistry, equilibrium, 2024 paper Q2, marked". Tick a block when it's done. Empty boxes are fine.

Block	Mon __/__/__	Tue __/__/__	Wed __/__/__	Thu __/__/__	Fri __/__/__	Sat __/__/__	Sun __/__/__
Block 1 25 min · school days about 4pm · days off about 10am							
Block 2 25 min · hardest subject here							
Long break 15+ min · move around							
Block 3 25 min							
Block 4 days off and weekends							
Block 5 days off only · if you need it							
Spare slot for catching up · 1 a day							
Evening test 25 min · weak topic · test again tomorrow							
Bad-day plan if today goes wrong: 5 min on one key topic, or write your own:							

Bedtime _____ · Get up _____ · same times every day · phone in another room while you study, check it in breaks

Six subjects in a week (example)

Mon A B · Tue C D · Wed E F · Thu A C · Fri B E · Sat D F A B · Sun C E D + spare. Each subject 2 or 3 times, no more than 4 days apart.

Missed a block?

- Don't do double tomorrow.
- Move it to your next spare slot, or skip the least important task.
- Missing one block won't undo your work. If you miss a few in a row, restart with your bad-day plan.
- Be kind to yourself. It makes it easier to start again.

NCEA Study Timetable

Exams Tue 10 Nov – Fri 4 Dec 2026 · Exams start at 9:30am or 2:00pm



Topic tracker: test yourself, don't guess

Red = I couldn't do it without notes. Amber = I could do some of it. Green = I did it and got it right. Do red topics first. Green on 3 different days is a good sign. Test it less often, but check it again before the exam, with a question you haven't seen.

Subject	Topic	Test 1 date · colour	Test 2	Test 3	Ready
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐

If-then plan (write it once)

Think of 3 things that usually stop you. Decide now what you'll do. Example: "If I get a message during a block, then I'll reply in my break."

If _____ then _____

If _____ then _____

If _____ then _____

When to do hard work

Plan hard work for when you feel most awake. Many teenagers find later mornings easier, but everyone is different. Before a 9:30 exam, practise timed questions at 9:30 too. Protect your sleep rather than getting up very early to study. Look at new or weak topics in the evening, then test yourself the next morning. Sleep helps you remember.

NCEA Study Timetable

Exams Tue 10 Nov – Fri 4 Dec 2026 · Exams start at 9:30am or 2:00pm



The last 2 days before each exam

2 days before

Light revision of topics you've already studied. At most one timed practice section, at the time of day of the exam. Try not to start new topics, unless your teacher says a gap is worth fixing. Normal bedtime.

The night before

Pack your bag: admission slip, black or blue pens, an approved calculator if your subject uses one (clear its memory), water. Check the room and start time. A little revision only. No caffeine in the 6 hours before bed. Screens off 1 hour before bed. Don't stay up all night. You'll lose more marks than you gain.

Exam morning

- Have breakfast.
- Warm up for 10 minutes: write key points from memory.
- Feeling nervous? You could write your worries down for 10 minutes before you go in.
- Get there at least 20 minutes early. Then stop revising and breathe.

In the exam room

- Bring your pens and equipment in a clear plastic bag.
- No watches of any kind. No phones, notes or blank paper.
- A switched-off phone, keys, money and medicine can go in a sealed clear bag under your chair.
- You can't leave in the first 45 minutes or the last 15 minutes.
- Write in black or blue pen unless told otherwise. NZQA can't accept pencil or erasable pen if you ask for a review.
- Some exams are on a computer and some are on paper. Ask your school which yours are. For digital exams, try NZQA's practice activities and check your NZQA login works.

After the exam

Try not to go over answers with friends. That exam is done. Check your week plan for what's next, then rest.

Look after yourself

Every day

- Keep your bedtime and wake-up time.
- Move for 20–30 minutes. Your long break is a good time.
- Keep your phone in another room while you study.
- Eat at normal times. Have breakfast before morning study.
- Quality beats hours. Take your breaks, and stop before study cuts into your sleep.

Free help, any time

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1737 | Call or text 1737. Free, any time. |
| Youthline | Call 0800 376 633 or text 234. Free, any time. |
| Emergency | Call 111 if you or someone else is in danger. |
| School | Your counsellor, dean, or the person who sorts exam help. |
| Doctor | For sleep, worry or a health problem that affects exams. |

Checked October 2026. If a number doesn't work, text 1737.

Why this plan works

Testing yourself, and spreading study over days, helps you remember more than reading notes. Sleep helps your brain keep what you learned. Regular breaks help you focus. Planning for things going wrong makes it easier to keep going.

Sources: Dunlosky et al. 2013; Rawson et al. 2018; Bower et al. 2023; Mazza et al. 2016; Cousins et al. 2019; Gollwitzer & Sheeran 2006; Drake et al. 2013; Ramirez & Beilock 2011.

About this plan. It's study advice based on research, not medical advice. If a health problem, disability or something at home affects your exams, talk to your school. Your school applies to NZQA for exam help, not your family.