

# Open book exams

The best way to prepare for an open-book exam is to spend a lot of time reading and leafing through the books – not just the summaries. The skills tested in this type of exam include:

- Your ability to distinguish between main and secondary issues
- Your ability to formulate an answer clearly, concisely and succinctly (writing technique)
- Your ability to look things up quickly (Do you know which section of a book you need? Are you good at thinking 'Oh yes, that's related to that and that, so I can look there and there'?).

## Tips:

- Buy the most important books (new or second-hand)
- Make notes in your book and highlight key passages
- Don't rely on the internet too much

You have to browse through a book, start reading at the front or back, and close it. The more well-thumbed your book is, the more it becomes a part of you. Some students think it's a shame to write in and highlight passages of their book. Hopefully you'll manage to get over this and actually make those notes! Professionals in the field say that even years after some examinations they still 'see' the answer they are looking for, with highlights and notes and all on that specific page. Sometimes this will give you the answer straight away. If nothing else, it's a very effective method for looking things up – you know exactly where you need to be.

There are two basic rules for highlighting text:

1. You only highlight text after you have read a chapter or section. That way, you have a better idea about the gist of the text than when you first read it.
2. You should not highlight more than 15-20% of a page. Otherwise, that's really a lot of important information on one page. Sometimes you might have a text that is jam-packed with information. In which case there's not much point highlighting, because the entire page will end up yellow. So you'll have to think of something else. Mind maps are a good alternative.

## Would you like more information?

University psychologists at Leiden University have developed a great website that outlines the different types of examinations and gives tips for the best ways to approach them. Check out the website (in Dutch only: <http://www.studietips.leidenuniv.nl/tentamens.html>).

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