

FREE STUDY PLANNER

The exam countdown planner

A backwards planning system for any professional exam. Set your date, map your modules, and **know exactly what to do each week** between now and exam day.

The backwards plan

Module map

12 week overview

Weekly templates

Practice exam log

Error log

Study techniques

Recovery plan

Final week countdown

Exam day checklist

THIS PLAN BELONGS TO

SUBJECT

EXAM DATE

How this planner works

Most study plans fail because they start from today and drift. This one starts from your exam date and works backwards, so every week has a job and nothing important gets left to the end.

1 Set up your subject

Write down your exam date, format, and the honest number of hours you can study each week. Ten real hours beat twenty imaginary ones. This takes five minutes and everything else builds on it.

2 Plan backwards from exam day

Lock in your milestones in reverse: exam day, a final review week, two practice exams, and a date when first-pass coverage is finished. Whatever weeks remain are your coverage window. The plan tells you the pace; you never have to guess if you are behind.

3 Map your modules to weeks

List your modules, size them, and give each one a target week inside the coverage window. Big or low-confidence modules get scheduled first, while there is still time to struggle with them.

4 Run the weeks, log the errors

Each week gets one focus and a short plan. Every practice question you get wrong goes in the error log with a fix. By exam week, that log is the most valuable revision document you own, because it is a list of exactly where your marks were leaking.

Three rules that do most of the work. Finish first-pass coverage at least two weeks before the exam. Sit at least two timed practice exams in that final fortnight. Leave one week unplanned as a buffer, because life will take it anyway.

CHEAT CODE Starting with six weeks, not twelve? The system still works. Compress the coverage window and keep the last two weeks exactly as they are. The countdown bends; the final fortnight does not.

STEP 1

Your subject setup

Five minutes, once per subject. Be honest with the hours; the plan believes whatever you tell it here.

PROGRAM

SUBJECT

EXAM DATE

WEEKS FROM TODAY TO EXAM

EXAM FORMAT

- ☐ Open book ☐ Closed book
- ☐ Multiple choice ☐ Written ☐ Mixed
- ☐ In person ☐ Online proctored

EXAM LENGTH AND STRUCTURE

Duration, question count, marks. Check the official outline.

Your real study budget

HOURS PER WEEK

WEEKS AVAILABLE

TOTAL HOURS

_____ × _____ = _____

Count only hours that survive contact with your actual life. Two weeknights and one weekend block is a realistic budget for most subjects.

MY STUDY SLOTS EACH WEEK (WHEN AND WHERE)

WHAT WILL GET IN THE WAY, AND MY WORKAROUND

CHEAT CODE Put your study slots in your calendar as recurring blocks. A slot with a name survives the week; "I will study at some point" does not. Bonus points for a boring name nobody wants to double-book.

STEP 2

The backwards plan

Start at the bottom with your exam date and work upwards, filling in each target date. Whatever sits between today and your coverage deadline is your coverage window.

MILESTONE	WHAT IT MEANS	TARGET DATE	DONE
Start	Setup done, modules mapped, week 1 planned		☐
Halfway checkpoint	Half the modules covered. If not, rebalance now, not later		☐
Coverage complete	Every module seen once. At least 2 weeks before the exam		☐
Practice exam 1	Full paper, timed, exam conditions. Mark it honestly		☐
Practice exam 2	Second timed paper after fixing the gaps from the first		☐
Final review week	No new content. Error log, summaries, weak modules only		☐
Exam day	The date everything above is built around		☐

Why coverage ends two weeks early. Practice exams are where marks are actually won, and they only tell you something if there is still time to act on the result. A first pass that ends the night before the exam is not a plan, it is a hope.

MY BUFFER WEEK (ONE WEEK YOU DELIBERATELY LEAVE UNPLANNED)

HINT Add each milestone to your phone calendar now, with alerts. Future you will claim they never agreed to any of this. The alerts are your receipts.

STEP 3

The module map

List every module or topic area in your subject. Size it, rate your confidence today, and give it a target week. Schedule the big and shaky ones first.

MODULE OR TOPIC	SIZE S / M / L	CONFIDENCE 1 TO 5	TARGET WEEK	COVERED
1				☐
2				☐
3				☐
4				☐
5				☐
6				☐
7				☐
8				☐
9				☐
10				☐

How to size a module

Use your study guide's page count or lecture hours as the proxy. L modules get two weeks or a full week plus a review slot. Two S modules can share a week.

Confidence beats preference

Anything rated 1 or 2 goes early in the window, even if you dread it. Starting with your favourite module feels productive and costs you the exam.

CHEAT CODE Not sure where the marks sit? Question banks are the map: the topics with the most past questions are the topics examiners love. Study the 20% that shows up in 80% of the questions first.

12 week overview

One line per week. Cross out any weeks you do not have, or extend by reprinting this page.

Mark your buffer week now with a big B.

WEEK	DATES	FOCUS FOR THE WEEK	HOURS DONE	ON TRACK
1				☐
2				☐
3				☐
4				☐
5				☐
6				☐
7				☐
8				☐
9				☐
10				☐
11				☐
12				☐

Halfway through the window, check the module map. If less than half is covered, do not study harder; cut scope. Merge small modules, trim depth on low-weight topics, and protect the practice exams.

HINT Sunday night, ten minutes: fill in next week's row here and the weekly page. Deciding what to study before Monday means weeknight sessions start with doing, not deciding.

This week's plan

FOCUS MODULE _____

DONE MEANS (ONE FINISH LINE FOR THE WEEK) _____

DAY	PLANNED SESSION	MINUTES	DONE
Mon			☐
Tue			☐
Wed			☐
Thu			☐
Fri			☐
Sat			☐
Sun			☐

QUESTIONS PRACTISED THIS WEEK (COUNT THEM)	CARRY OVER TO NEXT WEEK
_____	_____
WHAT STUCK	ONE THING TO DO DIFFERENTLY
_____	_____
_____	_____

CHEAT CODE The never miss twice rule: missing one session is life, missing two in a row is a trend. If Tuesday falls over, Wednesday becomes non-negotiable, even if it is only 25 minutes.

Study techniques that earn their time

The difference between candidates is rarely hours; it is what fills them. Four methods worth building your sessions around, and the habit that ties them together.

Recall beats rereading

Rereading feels productive because everything looks familiar. Familiar is not the same as known. Close the notes and write out what you remember, then open them and fill the gaps. The gaps are the study plan.

Attempt before you check

With worked examples, cover the solution and attempt the question cold. Then check line by line and mark exactly where you diverged. Reading a solution first only teaches you to nod along.

Run flashcards in three piles

Know it, shaky, no idea. Spend your time on the shaky pile; it converts fastest. The know pile gets one quick pass a week so it stays known. The no idea pile means go back to the notes, not the cards.

End every session ten minutes early

Spend the last ten minutes on an older module: a handful of flashcards or one past question. Mixing old with new is what keeps week 2 material alive in week 9.

Space your reviews

One pass never holds. Review each topic on a widening schedule: a couple of days after learning it, then about a week later, then a few weeks on. Log the dates here for the topics that matter most.

TOPIC	LEARNED	REVIEW 1 (+2 DAYS)	REVIEW 2 (+1 WEEK)	REVIEW 3 (+3 WEEKS)

CHEAT CODE

The out-loud test: explain a topic to the wall, the dog, or a very patient partner. Wherever you stall or start waving your hands is exactly what goes on your one page summary.

Study session log

A running record of every session. The last column is the one that matters: write where the next session starts, so you never lose twenty minutes working out where you were up to.

[illegible]

HINT Park facing downhill. Fill the last column before you pack up and future you rolls straight into the work, instead of idling at the top of a blank page wondering what happened last Tuesday.

Practice exam log

Every attempt goes here, sat under exam conditions: timed, no pausing, notes only if your real exam allows them. The score matters less than the pattern across attempts.

NO.	DATE	PAPER OR SOURCE	SCORE	TIME OVER OR UNDER	WEAKEST MODULE THIS ATTEMPT
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

After every attempt, do three things

- ☐ Every wrong answer goes into the error log
- ☐ Rework each one from scratch, unaided
- ☐ Book the next session against the weakest module

Timing tells you as much as the score

Finished 20 minutes early with a low score usually means rushing. Ran out of time with strong answers means your per-question budget needs work, not more content review.

MY PER-QUESTION TIME BUDGET (EXAM MINUTES ÷ QUESTIONS)

CHEAT CODE Rehearse the conditions, not just the content: same time of day as the real exam, same calculator, same allowed materials, phone in another room. On the day, nothing should feel new except the questions.

Error log

Every question you get wrong earns a row. Naming **why** you got it wrong is what stops the repeat: not knowing it, misreading it, or knowing it but running out of time are three different problems with three different fixes.

MODULE	THE MISTAKE	WHY IT HAPPENED	THE FIX OR RULE TO REMEMBER	FIXED
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐

In your final review week, revise from this page before anything else. Print more copies as it fills; a long error log before exam day is a good sign, not a bad one.

CHEAT CODE The three strikes rule: any topic with three rows in this log gets promoted straight to your one page summary. It has earned the spotlight.

Your one page summary

One page per subject that holds the things you keep forgetting. Add to it every week; by exam week it is the only page you need on the morning of. If your exam is open book, this doubles as your quick-reference sheet.

FORMULAS AND CALCULATIONS

DEFINITIONS AND THRESHOLDS

TRAPS I KEEP FALLING FOR

OPEN BOOK: TABS AND PAGE NUMBERS TO MARK

HINT Final week upgrade: rewrite this page from memory, then compare it with the original. The gaps between the two versions are your last revision list.

If you fall behind

Every plan slips; that is why it has a buffer. What matters is what you do next. Find your situation below, make the call, and keep moving. **A cut-down plan you follow beats a full plan you abandoned.**

Missed one week

Spend your buffer week and change nothing else. Do not try to double up next week; overloaded weeks are how one missed week becomes three. Cross the buffer off the 12 week overview and carry on.

Missed two or more

The buffer is gone, so scope has to give. Merge small modules into one week, take large low-confidence modules down to key concepts plus questions, and drop your session count per module before you drop any module entirely.

Behind at the halfway checkpoint

Stop and re-plan; it takes 30 minutes. Recount the weeks left, re-rank the remaining modules by size and confidence, and rebuild the overview from today. A smaller honest plan restarted at halfway still finishes. The original plan is not sacred; the exam date is.

Less than three weeks and not covered

Flip the plan: practice first. Sit a timed paper now and let the results choose what you study. Uncovered modules get one summary pass and questions only. This is triage: it spends the time you have left on what the paper actually asks, instead of spreading it evenly across everything you have not read.

Cut in this order

1. Depth on small, low-weight modules
2. Second passes of covered material
3. Sessions per module (keep every module's questions)
4. Whole modules, smallest and safest first

Never cut

The two timed practice exams

The error log review

The final week structure

Sleep in the last three nights

The 30 minute re-plan

WEEKS LEFT

MODULES LEFT

WHAT I AM CUTTING, AND TO WHAT LEVEL

The final week countdown

No new content from here. The final week is for sharpening what you already know and getting the logistics boring. Tick the days down.

DAY	THE JOB	DONE
7 days out	Sit your last full practice exam under real conditions. Mark it the same day.	☐
6 days out	Work the error log from that attempt. Rework every miss unaided.	☐
5 days out	Weakest module, one focused session. Update the one page summary.	☐
4 days out	Second weakest module. Timed question sets, not rereading.	☐
3 days out	Full pass of the error log and the one page summary. Confirm exam logistics.	☐
2 days out	Light review only. Prepare materials, ID, and setup. Test any exam software.	☐
1 day out	Thirty minutes with the one page summary, then stop. Early night. You are as ready as the last twelve weeks made you.	☐

If you are behind, cut in this order. Drop depth on small, low-weight modules first. Never drop the practice exams, the error log review, or sleep. Those three are on the list because none of them can be made up in the final week, and all three are what you rely on inside the exam room.

HINT Athletes taper before race day and so should you. Easing off in the last 48 hours is not slacking; it is how you arrive sharp instead of cooked.

Exam day

Everything decided in advance, so the only thinking you do today is inside the paper.

LOGISTICS

VENUE OR EXAM SOFTWARE

CHECK-IN OR LOGIN TIME

TRAVEL TIME OR TECH CHECK DONE BY

ID AND MATERIALS ALLOWED

THE NIGHT BEFORE AND THE MORNING OF

- ☐ Bag or desk packed: ID, water, allowed materials
- ☐ One page summary printed or tabbed
- ☐ Alarm set, backup alarm set
- ☐ Computer updated and exam software tested
- ☐ Normal breakfast, nothing experimental
- ☐ Arrive or log in early, phone away

Four rules inside the exam

1. First two minutes: note your per-question time budget and the marks per section.
2. Answer what is asked, not what you revised. Reread the question before you commit.
3. Stuck for more than your budget? Flag it, move on, and come back. Marks are everywhere; time is not.
4. Ten minutes to go: stop perfecting, start checking flagged questions and blank answers. A guess beats a blank on multiple choice.

AFTER THE EXAM, ONE NOTE TO FUTURE YOU (WHAT TO DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT SUBJECT)

CHEAT CODE Easy marks first: sweep the paper and bank every question you can answer on sight. Confidence compounds, and so do marks.