REST BREAKS

Rules and procedures for the Higher School Certificate examinations

This leaflet should be distributed to students granted the use of rest breaks, their parents, presiding officers, examination supervisors and Year 12 coordinators.

What are rest breaks?
Rest breaks are breaks in the examination time in which students:

- must turn over or close their examination questions and answers
- must not read, write or make notes
- may stretch, move, rest or refocus in their seat.

How are rest breaks calculated?
The maximum amount of time granted is given as a rate of minutes per half hour of examination time, usually 5 minutes per half hour of examination time. The total amount of time allowable for breaks is calculated by multiplying this rate by the number of half-hour intervals.

Can the student take a rest break for shorter than 5 minutes?
No. All students, even those without rest breaks, take short moments to stretch or refocus during their allocated examination time. Rest breaks are designed for students with disabilities that cannot be reasonably addressed in this manner. Therefore, each rest break must be taken for a minimum of 5 minutes.

If a student’s remaining rest break allowance falls below 5 minutes, no further rest breaks may be taken. For example, if a student is approved rest breaks at the rate of 5 minutes per half hour, the allowance for rest breaks in a three-hour examination starts at 30 minutes. If the student elects to take, for example, three 9-minute rest breaks, a fourth rest break may not be taken as the remaining allowance is only 3 minutes.

Can the student take a rest break for longer than 5 minutes?
Yes. If the student does not feel sufficiently rested after 5 minutes, they may elect to take a longer break, as long as the total time taken for rest breaks does not exceed what has been approved. The supervisor is to record the amount of time taken to rest and ensure it does not exceed the maximum allowance. For example, if a student is approved rest breaks at the rate of 5 minutes per half hour, the total amount of rest breaks taken in a three-hour examination must not exceed 30 minutes. Therefore the student may choose to take, for example, one 12-minute, one 8-minute and two 5-minute rest breaks.

Do the breaks have to be taken at half-hourly intervals?
No. The student can determine the times at which rest breaks are to be taken and must advise the examination supervisor whenever they wish to take a rest break.
Do students have to be in separate supervision to take rest breaks?
Students approved rest breaks are automatically granted small group supervision. Most students choose to use small group supervision but some students may elect to sit with the main body of students and be placed at the front or back of the examination room. Either option is permitted, but students should be aware that if they elect to sit with the main body of students, they may still be doing their examination when the other students have finished and are leaving the room.

Should students practise with rest breaks in examination situations?
Yes. Students will benefit from being aware of how to use the rest break provision to best suit their examination needs. For example, some students may require 5-minute breaks at regular intervals. Other students may benefit from taking fewer breaks of longer duration. An awareness of the examination format and individual examination needs will assist students in using rest breaks to best suit their needs.

If you have further questions, please contact the Student Support Services Branch on (02) 9367 8117 or studentsupport@bostes.nsw.edu.au

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