

TOLLEY TOP TIPS FOR OPEN BOOK ON-SCREEN EXAMS

OPEN BOOK EXAMS

The November 2020 sitting of the ATT and CTA exams will be **open book – this** means that you can refer to your **Tolley study material** (or any other books) during the exam as well as the Yellow & Orange Legislation Handbooks.

You will be typing up your exam real answers in “Exam4” which is essentially word processing software.

TOP TIP: You will either need hard copies of the Tolley material or a second device on which to view the pdf versions.

Note that you will not be able to “cut and paste” from any existing documents into your exam answers.

Due to the time pressured nature of the ATT and CTA exams, there has only ever been a limited amount of time available to “look things up” in the legislation and this will not change for November 2020. At Tolley we do not anticipate there will be time to read and then type up detail from your study manuals in the exam.

TOP TIP: Don't spend too long referring to your books - it is more important to concentrate on applying your knowledge to the scenario and typing up your answer.

We therefore recommend that you have **one main hard copy reference document** for your exam and anticipate that you will primarily refer to your own personalised version of the Tolley **Memory Joggers** for exam purposes.

Memory Joggers

The Memory Joggers contain a summary of the main points covered in each chapter of your study manuals as well as useful proformas.

TOP TIP: Instead of using the small spiral bound booklet provided you may prefer to **print your own larger version onto A4 paper and have it in a binder**. This may make it easier for you to add additional summaries (or even certain pages from the full study manuals as desired).

You should be **annotating** your Memory Joggers as you study and should consider using **index flags and/or dividers** to help you navigate around them and adding to the contents listing for them if you do add extra things.

TOP TIP: From now onwards you should be **personalising** your Memory Joggers so that they will be as useful as possible for you in the real exam.

You may still need to refer to detailed conditions within the study manuals or the legislation on occasion so these should be available to you in the exam (and can be annotated and tabbed) but they should not be your first choice of reference material – your Memory Joggers will provide you with the references you need to find most conditions!

If you are sitting an ATT paper you may also wish to have your copies of the **Law and Ethics books** to hand to help answer any questions that test the specified chapters from those two books. You can again use index flags and highlight these books.

Other books

As you sit each practice exam, use your Memory Joggers and work out how much time it takes to look things up. Overall, we think that you are likely to realise that the key to passing your exam is **applying your knowledge** and that in order to pass you will need to only be looking things up sparingly.

Warning!

Another danger is that with your study manuals available, you will “strive for perfection” – you need to bear in mind that the pass mark is 50% so perfect answers are not expected. The more time spent on a question, the lower the “return” in terms of marks gained. In a 20 mark question, most candidates can get the first 6 or 7 marks - the **key to passing is getting the next 5 or 6 marks** to take you to 12 out of 20.

TOP TIP: Don't worry about the last few marks! Over-running on one question and omitting, say, a 10 marker at the end means you risk failing the paper!

Summary

- Your main reference material should be your **annotated Memory Joggers**
- **Personalise these** as you study, adding your own notes and tips and perhaps even add certain pages from the main study manuals
- **Practice using** these Memory Joggers and **ensure you can navigate round them well**
- Do also have your full study manuals and legislation available for back up
- ATT students should have the Law and Ethics books available too
- Do not become overly reliant on looking things up
- You will still need to apply your knowledge to the scenario set to pass the exam
- Manage your timing carefully

ON-SCREEN EXAMS

As the November exams will be sat online, Tolley have now created a new on-screen exam system to allow you to sit your mocks online.

TOP TIP: Use this new system for sitting and submitting your pre-revision and revision mocks as it will be a useful way to prepare for sitting the real November exam within Exam4

The system closely simulates the functionality of Exam4.

TOP TIP: Ensure that you have the books you wish to refer to during the exam ready on your desk as well a copy of the **Tax Tables (which can be found in the front of each study manual).**

You need to **remain online** throughout the Tolley mock exams and your typed answers will be **auto-saved** throughout the exam.

The Tolley on-screen exam will be timed and will run for 3 hours 30 mins (210 minutes) apart from CTA AW which will run for 3 hours 15 minutes (195 minutes). It is **not possible to pause** the exam once the countdown has started.

At the end of the timed exam your answer script will **automatically be submitted** to Tolley for marking and you will receive confirmation of this. It is possible to **choose to finish your exam early** but if you select this option you will be asked to confirm that you do wish to submit your answers at that time and will **not then be able to re-enter** the exam.

During the exam your screen will have the **question paper on the right hand side** and a **text box on the left hand side** for you to type your answers into.

You may use the copy, cut & paste functions and also bold, italic & underline.

You can also use “undo” and “redo” and “backspace” although the “delete” key does not work (which simulates Exam4).

For computational answers you can use the tab button on your keyboard to move numbers into columns.

Format of the exam

ATT:

The paper will have a mixture of computational and written questions with no question choice. **Part I has** between 10 and 20 “**short form**” questions (“**SFQs**”) worth between 2 and 4 marks. **Part II has** between 3 and 5 **long questions** each between 10 and 20 marks (often split into shorter subsections with marks specifically allocated). Although you can answer the exam paper in any order you wish, we find most ATT students prefer to **attempt the short form questions in Part I first**. Part I will cover a range of topics and they will get your ‘brain into gear’ ready for the longer questions.

CTA Awareness:

The paper will contain all 5 Modules and it is vital you answer the questions from your 3 chosen modules. Failing to do so will affect the Advanced Technical papers you may attempt. Each module has **12 questions worth 5 marks each**. The questions may be written or numerical or a mixture of both. You should answer **in bullet point format and use summary computations**.

CTA Advanced Technical:

The paper will contain a number of **long style questions** each set for **10, 15 or 20 marks**. There will be a mixture of **computational and written** style questions. All questions are **compulsory**. There are usually six questions but this can vary.

CTA Application and Professional Skills:

The paper will contain one case study style question with a requirement and various exhibits including the pre seen information.

Approach to the exam

For ATT and CTA AT do take time to read through the long questions to get a feel for the style of the questions, technical content and ultimately what you are being asked to do. **Never simply attempt the long questions in the order they appear.**

TOP TIP: Answer your best question (or best AW Module first) and make sure you clearly label which question your answer relates to.

Timing is the key

All the ATT, CTA AT and CTA APS exams are 3½ hours (210 minutes) – the CTA AW paper is 3¼ hours (195 minutes).

Timing is fundamental to passing the exam. More students fail the exam due to messing up the timing rather than anything else. To get your timing right, you should note **down the end time** for each question (or for ATT Part I or each AW Module as appropriate).

TOP TIP: During the exam we recommend you should **allocate 1.9 minutes per mark (or 5 minutes per AW question)** which allows some time at the start to look through the paper and work out which order you will do the questions/Modules in and some review time at the end to review your answers and revisit questions as needed.

As you practice more questions **you will speed up** in your:

- Understanding of what the question is asking
- Recall of technical content
- Using the legislation and your open books
- Phrasing what you want to say
- Typing up your answer

TOP TIP: Look for the easy marks

There are always **easy marks at the start of a question**, so **aim to start each question**. The last few marks you are trying to get by finishing that question are likely to be the harder marks – better to focus on securing the easy marks at the start of the next question.

TOP TIP: Never waste time getting stuck on a question – always keep moving on and keep scoring marks!

If you have time at the end you can always go back – even if it's just to write a few bullet points!

You could note down on a piece of paper the numbers of the questions you'd like to revisit if you have time at the end of the exam

TOP TIP: Indicate in the answer text box somewhere (perhaps using a series of asterisks *********) where you would like to revisit an answer later.

Presentation of long questions

Using the correct format for your answer is extremely important in the exams, e.g. report, letter, notes, memorandum. If the correct format is not used, marks will be lost unnecessarily. **There are marks specifically available for presentation** in Part II of all ATT papers and in the written questions on the CTA AT papers. There are no presentation marks available in the CTA AW paper.

All workings should be in an Appendix then cross-referenced to the main body of the letter/memorandum.

When writing to a **client**, **try and explain things simply** without using overly technical phrases or section numbers. In other answers, including notes for a **tax partner**, **more technical** answers should be given.

Try not to put more than one important point in each paragraph. Leave a line between each paragraph (you are inviting the marker to pause and award marks!)

TOP TIP: Think **“one point per paragraph”**.

Paragraphs should not run to more than 3 or 4 lines. Using **short “snappy” paragraphs makes answers easier on the eye**, and therefore more likely to attract marks. “White space” is important and helps the marker.

Presentation is just as important for **computational questions**. Use the correct **pro forma** – so if it's an income tax calculation lay your answer **using tabs to move the numbers into columns** for savings, non-savings and dividend income etc. The marker will expect to see a pro forma so give them one and **spread it out, referencing in workings** so it is nice and easy to follow.

TOP TIP: Add a copy of the suggested layouts for a memo/report/email and a letter as shown in the Appendix to your Memory Jogger so you can easily refer to it in the exam.

Reviewing your answers

Once you have started answering the questions, check back to the requirement again to ensure you are on the right lines. You may refer to use your study material to check your understanding but be careful not to spend too much time doing this.

The first thing the marker will do is read your answer through as a whole – what overall impression are you giving of your ability? Have you put the marker in a good mood as soon as they see your script or are they going to be dreading marking what you have submitted?

Key **presentation considerations** include:

- Spacing your answer out
- Ensuring you have clearly labelled which question each answer relates to
- Cross referencing your workings
- Using subheadings and short paragraphs in written answers
- Using the appropriate pro forma for calculations

TOP TIP: Read through your answer when finished

You may make some small corrections at this review stage – have you missed out a vital word such as “not”, or can you think of another point or two to add?

With numerical questions if you make a mistake in the first part of your answer which means the rest of your numbers are wrong don't panic! **The marker will only penalise once for the initial error. You will gain 'follow-through' marks.**

If on review, you realise you made a mistake which affects large part of the answer and the numbers **DO NOT try to re-work the correct answer in full.** Instead, put a note at the bottom of your answer showing the error. In this case you can still obtain full marks for the answer.

When you get your answer script back, review your answers together with the model answer

On your marked script, look at what **scored marks** and what was a waste of effort and **scored nothing**. Look at **mistakes made** – were they just a silly error or had you misunderstood something?

Your answer is unlikely to look exactly like the model answer. This does not matter if you have covered the key points. When going through the model answer it can be useful to **highlight the points you did get** (even if you covered them in a different order and worded them slightly differently).

Where you missed points, review why that happened:

- Did you misinterpret the question?
- Did you answer the question asked or the question you wished they had asked?
- Did you forget about a particular technical point you know well?
- Did you not understand the point they made?

Remember – the mocks are designed to test and stretch your knowledge. Treat them as if they were the real exam. The Tolley on-screen exam will be timed (there is a countdown timer) to ensure you sit the exams to time and this will provide a good test to see how your studies are going.

TOP TIP: Review, reflect, learn for next time

APPENDIX
SUGGESTED LAYOUTS FOR A MEMO/EMAIL/REPORT OR LETTER

It's a good idea to practice these layouts and **have a typical opening/closing line in mind** so you don't have to waste time thinking of one in the exam.

For a letter it's a good technique to start by typing up your opening format. Further down the text box you could type closing line with sign off. Then go back up in the text box and complete the earlier part of letter.

Memorandum/Email/Report

These should be headed:

To:
From:
Subject:
Date:

Briefly state the purpose of the report in the first paragraph.

The final paragraph should include recommendations or a conclusion depending on the question.

In the CTA APS paper you should include an executive summary towards the start of your report.

Letter

The letter should be addressed correctly using the address information in the question if given (if not given you may short cut with "Your address", "My address", "Date") and be headed, finished and signed off (do not use your own name – "Tax Adviser" will do).

The following format is acceptable:

[Firm's Name & Address per Q]

[Client Name & Address per Q]

Date

Dear [Client Name per Q]

SUBJECT OF LETTER

Body of letter

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely (if to Mr/Mrs X) or Yours faithfully (if to Sir/Madam)

Tax Adviser

There should be a brief introductory paragraph and recommendations or a conclusion depending on the question.