

Prepping for Exams

Some useful tips to help you prepare for your exams and make sure you have a successful, and less stressful, exam period.



Pace Yourself

- Recall and review material frequently (preferably throughout the term).
- Stick to a study schedule and balance your time across various courses. When doing review try focusing on one subject for 2-3 hours (in 50/10 minute chunks that is) and then switching to a new subject.
- Don't attempt a marathon study session! Study for 50 minutes and then take a 10 minute break to rest your brain and refocus ... but then get back to work for another 50 minutes.
- Break the material into chunks or sections (e.g. chapters, lectures, topics, themes) as a way to divide your study schedule.
- Allow time for sleep, exercise and fun!



Protect Your Health

- Sleep is not something you can go without so make room for it in your study schedule.
- Eat your vegetables (Mom knew what she was talking about)! A well balanced diet will help you stay focused longer.
- Don't forget about exercise. Physical activity is the best way to get rid of a build up of stress hormones.
- Protect your mental health too by keeping a positive, optimistic attitude.



Get All the Info

- Find out what types of questions are going to be on the exam.
- Go to the review lectures/tutorial to get an idea of what to expect and what you won't be tested on. Don't forget to bring your questions.
- Check for old exams (however, be cautious if the course was taught by a different professor in previous years).
- Look over the syllabus again to review what the major themes or goals of the course are. This will likely be the focus of the exam.
- If the prof is getting questions from a bank provided by the textbook have a look through the practice tests provided in the study guide or on the accompanying website.
- Check, double check and triple check when and where your exam is. Make sure you give yourself enough travel time to arrive at least 10-15 minutes prior to your exam. Try to avoid interacting with students who are high-strung and who stress out while waiting for the exam to start. At this point you know what you know – last minute studying while waiting outside will do more harm than good.



Match Your Study Strategies to the Exam Format

- Memorizing works for some exams (such as multiple choice), while others require more critical thinking, analysis, application and integration of ideas (such as problem based and essay exams). Match the way you study to the type of exam you're taking.
- Group, compare, contrast and expand on broader themes/ideas if you have an essay exam.
- For a problem based finals (math, chemistry, physics, accounting, etc.) do lots of practice problems and understand how to (a) manipulate formulas and (b) have an understanding of what each formula helps you find.
- Look over case studies and know how to apply theories to real life situations if your exam is more application and analysis based.



Know Your Learning Style

- **Visual learners** benefit from using mind maps, colour coordinating their study notes and posting study aids in their room and on their walls/mirrors.
- **Auditory learners** learn well by reciting info out loud, making rhymes or songs, teaching the info to their friends or stuffed animals, and listening to music while they study (classical music or 60 beats per minute works best).
- **Kinesthetic learners** benefit from rewriting (not typing) their notes, walking or exercising while they recite info or 'acting out' the material (nothing like making up an interpretative dance for photosynthesis!).
- No matter what type of learner you are, our brains are best able to organize and retain information when learned in a **multi-modal or multi-sensory fashion**, so incorporate a few strategies from each into your routine.



Commit to a Study Group

- Studies show that students who study in a group for 25% of their total review time have higher grades than those who study exclusively on their own.

