

# Preparation For A Successful Exam Day

How should you prepare?

- 1) Start your preparation early. Two to three weeks before your first final, map out the amount of time you will need to study.  
Suggestion:
  - Use a five-day study plan in which you count back five days from each of your final exam dates to determine when to start studying for each exam. For example, if you have an exam on Wednesday, start studying for it on the preceding Saturday.
  - Schedule blocks of time each day to study--divide the day by studying in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening.
- 2) Organize your study area to reduce interference.
  - Make sure that you have all the necessary materials before you begin studying. Some students study better if they have a regular spot which they can go to.
- 3) To keep you motivated, break down tasks, vary study hours and subjects.
- 4) Use active strategies to study.
  - Write and recite so you can move information into long-term memory.
  - Use flashcards, self-tests, and recitation to test your understanding of the material.
  - Rather than rereading the notes you took and the study sheets or maps, etc. that you prepared, create new ones by using your notes and study sheets as your starting points to create new notes. You should have approximately three to five pages of key terms, ideas, and review material. It is also a good idea to draw diagrams, charts, maps, etc. for visual aid.
  - Study from old tests. Copy out the questions and answer them again without looking at your old answers.
- 5) Ask about test format find out if it will be multiple choice, essay, true or false, or a combination of these so that you will know how to study best.
- 6) Form a study group not just for the night before the exam, but one that meets throughout the semester.
- 7) Teach it to someone if you can teach the material to someone then you can be sure that you know it.



# Matching your studying to your exam question types

## Multiple choice exams

### What to study?

For explicit comprehension questions, focus on memorizing terms, definitions, facts, and concepts that can be stated in a succinct way. For application questions, practice applying the concepts and/or procedures to new situations. Think deeper and focus on the Big Picture (this takes longer than basic comprehension questions).

### How to study?

Study in short blocks (20-30 minutes with a 5-10 minute break) over many days. Review daily. Answer the study guide.

## Essay exams

### What to study?

Focus on the major themes of the course to get the Big Picture: think deeply to understand how the main ideas and details are related. Elaborate, compare, evaluate the materials. Generate possible exam questions and answer them in writing (or if you don't have time, make a detailed outline for each).

### How to study?

Use mindmaps and graphic organizers which organize around the central theme. Study in longer blocks (e.g. 2.5 hours: 50 minutes, 10 minutes break, 50 more minutes). Start far enough ahead of the exam for the information to 'percolate' in your mind.

## Problem-type exams

### What to study?

Focus on solving problems and identifying the underlying concepts. Try to see a pattern, i.e. look for problems that cluster around the same theme, in order to reduce the number of problems you will need to do. Practice by answering old exams, test, labs, and homework questions.

### How to study?

See the how to study for math exam prep sheet

# Words To Watch For On Exams:

The following words are commonly found in exam questions. Understanding them is essential to success on such questions. If you want to do well on an exam then know these words backward and forward. To heighten your awareness of them, underline the words when you see them in a test question.

<p><b>Analyze:</b> Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.</p>	<p><b>Explain:</b> Make an idea clear. Show logically how a concept is developed. Give the reasons for an event.</p>
<p><b>Compare:</b> Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences.</p>	<p><b>Illustrate:</b> Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.</p>
<p><b>Contrast:</b> Show differences. Set in opposition.</p>	<p><b>Interpret:</b> Comment upon, give examples, describe relationships. Explain the meaning. Describe, then evaluate.</p>
<p><b>Criticize:</b> Make judgements. Evaluate comparative worth. Criticism often involves analysis.</p>	<p><b>Outline:</b> Describe main ideas, characteristics, or events. (Does not necessarily mean "write a Roman numeral/letter outline.")</p>
<p><b>Define:</b> Give the meaning; usually a meaning specific to the course or subject. Determine the precise limits of the term to be defined. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually short.</p>	<p><b>Prove:</b> Support with facts (especially facts presented in class or in the test.)</p>
<p><b>Describe:</b> Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities, and parts.</p>	<p><b>Relate:</b> Show the connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.</p>
<p><b>Discuss:</b> Consider and debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Write about and conflict. Compare and contrast.</p>	<p><b>State:</b> Explain precisely.</p>
<p><b>Summarize:</b> Give a brief, condensed account. Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.</p>	<p><b>Enumerate:</b> List several ideas, aspects, events, things, qualities, reasons, etc.</p>
<p><b>Trace:</b> Show the order of events or progress of a subject or event.</p>	<p><b>Evaluate:</b> Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the evaluation. In math class this means to find a numerical answer.</p>