

Study Tips for Final Exams

Studying for finals can feel overwhelming. Take the time to plan, and stick to the plan – and you can do well.

Before the Final Exam - (If possible, reduce your work schedule if you have a regular, part-time job)

1. PLAN

Make decisions about what to study and when and where you will study.

What to study

- Focus on the most important information/concepts and what you don't know or get stuck on.
- If you know the material, review if you have time.
- *Accept reality* - You cannot learn a whole semester's material in a week or a few days. Use your analytical skills to determine where you can best put your time and energy.

When to study.

- Establish a study schedule.
- Study the most difficult material first
- Designate the majority of study time for what you don't know or need to clarify.

Where to study.

- Have a place designated for studying.
- Save chatting with friends, text-messaging, etc., for other spaces.

2. PRIORITIZE

- What are you most in danger of failing/lowest grade(s)?
- What is most difficult?
- What is most needed to bring up your GPA?

3. STUDY

- Memory work: Create acronyms or other mnemonic techniques.
- Break long memory lists into smaller sections.
- Try following the 7 plus or minus 2 rule. The brain can more easily remember lists of 5, 7 or 9 items.
- Analysis: Practice cause and effect explanations or problem-solutions. Use techniques that fit the subject.
- *Become the professor.* Try thinking through the eyes and mind of the teacher. Create your own test. What is most important? What did the professor mention or stress? If everything seemed important, what do you—as a rational, intelligent human being—think is most important? Why?
- Review class notes, handouts, and online tests. Review the headings and subheadings in chapters (if a textbook was used in the course).
- Try writing an explanation of a procedure, math problem and solution, etc.
- Find alternative sources for information if you don't understand something.

Length of study periods:

- About 90 minutes at a time, if possible, then a short break.
- Review in your head while riding in a car/bus, during commercials on TV, any down time.
- Include breaks, but be reasonable about them.
- Maintain the study schedule, with a little flexibility. Learn to say "No, not now" to friends and family who ask you to get off your study schedule.

4. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- **Reduce stress** through dance, exercise, laughter, meditation, music, relaxation, and/or yoga.
- Positive thinking through affirmations can help calm, energize, and empower you
- Deep breathing before and during study and tests, helps the body relax and the brain to focus.
- Have balance in all things: work, study, exercise, eat healthy, and plenty of rest! Our brains function better when we have a balance of all these.
- Eat healthy meals (whole fruits and vegetables, reduce sugar and excessive caffeine).
- Get a good night's rest before the final exam.
- Eat a healthy, nutritious breakfast before the exam.

During the Final Exam: Do's and Don'ts

| Do's | Don'ts |
|---|---|
| Be at the testing room with several minutes to spare. | Talk to your classmates or try to review. Doing so could just increase anxiety if a question you hadn't thought of is mentioned. |
| Take a few relaxing deep breaths, counting slowly while breathing in and just as slowly while breathing out (do only about 2-3 to prevent hyperventilating). | Allow your tension, if you have any, to remain. Do the breathing, muscle relaxation, and sensory techniques listed in the Do column to help calm yourself. |
| Do a few neck and shoulder relaxation exercises, very slowly without causing any pain, to reduce tension. | Scan the test when you get it to see what it on it, the value of each question. |
| Focus on pleasant sensory images or objects. Doing so will further relax you. | Plan briefly which questions you are going to answer. |
| Get your test-taking material out ahead of time, but don't focus on it. | If allowed to write on the test or a scratch sheet of paper, jot down one or two words for each essay question or question in which you immediately know something about it. You can then refer back to it when you get to that question. |
| State positive affirmations to yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I am prepared for this test. <input type="checkbox"/> More and more I am learning how to take tests. <input type="checkbox"/> I love this class (even if you don't). <input type="checkbox"/> I am able to reason well. <input type="checkbox"/> I am calm. <input type="checkbox"/> I am peaceful. <input type="checkbox"/> I am reading each question carefully and understanding it. | If you get tired or anxious, put your pen or pencil down (or stop typing) and close your eyes. Do the counting and breathing exercise, then breathe naturally for 2-3 breaths. Come back to the question. If still stressed, look at what parts of the question you know. If it's a total blank, skip it and go on to the next question. Look for clues within the test that might help answer that question. Also, put the test question into perspective. If it's one question worth 2 points, go to more heavily weighted questions. If it's an essay question, answer what you do know, even if it is only a little. If still stuck, close your eyes again, and think for just a minute or two about something pleasant (a favorite pet or object, a favorite place). Use all your senses. After a couple of minutes, come back to the test. Answer another question and then return to this one. |
| Stretch your neck and shoulders throughout the test when you notice your shoulders, back, or neck are tense. | Give up if the test is very confusing. Keep trying until the end of the class. |
| Accept what you know on the test and what you don't know. Make positive statements, "I don't know what that question is about, but after the test I will look it up so that I do know it. I can always learn." | Call yourself a failure if you didn't do well. When we label ourselves negatively, we hurt ourselves. |
| Review briefly to see if you have all the essential parts written on the test: name, ID, Course, Section #, etc. Make sure you have answered all the questions you can answer. Make sure you have not skipped a line on a scantron sheet. | Ruminate over questions you didn't get. Forgive yourself if you did not study properly and decide to study more efficiently. Seek help from the Student Success Center or other resources to help you learn how to study better. |
| After turning in the test, relax, reward yourself in a healthy way for doing a good job. | Allow one test to determine how you perform on all other tests. There may have been circumstances beyond your control affecting your study time. If not, resolve to do better the next time. |
| When you are rested, look up any questions you remember that you missed. | Sit idle |

Understanding Your Semester Grades

Your semester grades will be comprised of the following:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| 1 st quarter Grade | = 40% |
| 2 nd quarter Grade | = 40% |
| Final Exam | = 20% |
| Grade on Transcript | = 100%* |

* Some teachers will use 40% or 20% of your letter grade (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0),
Some teachers will use 40% or 20% of your percentage grade (If you have C 72% - 72% is used)
Speak with your teacher to find out which system he/she uses.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

- If you have failed, or will fail, a quarter – you can STILL PASS THE SEMESTER!!!! Don't give up!
- You MUST take your final exam in ALL classes, or you fail the whole semester!
- Begin studying NOW so as not to stress yourself later! Cramming never works.
- Attendance in these last couple weeks is VERY IMPORTANT!!! Be here – Don't miss out on material that you will be tested on later!

