

Preparing for Exams and Final Exams

Prioritize

Make an ordered list of things to study and projects to complete based on time and importance. Without having some semblance of an agenda planned, it will become very easy for you to mismanage all of the study time that you have available to you. Know where you currently stand grade wise in your classes, so you know how well you will have to do on the final to get the grade you desire.

Study Time

Be prepared for some seriously intensive study and plan for it accordingly. Study when it best suits you. Some people have more energy in the daytime, therefore study harder then, while others have higher efficiency during the late hours of the night. Find what works best for you and dedicate your more difficult tasks to these study times.

Time Management

Plan, plan, plan. Before finals begin, get out your calendar and schedule as much of your finals week as possible. Then stick with the schedule.

When it comes to studying, start early and start small. Begin reviewing several days out from the final exam and do only short reviews that are meant to re-familiarize you with material you haven't seen in a while. This is the studying analogue of skimming a book before you read it, or putting primer down on a wall you are going to paint before you paint it. It takes time and a somewhat gentle touch to get your brain ready to assimilate and recall all the stuff it will need to.

Review previous quizzes, tests and coursework. This can help you learn which areas you need to work harder in as well as give you an idea of the type of questions that may appear on your final exams. It's possible that some of the exact same questions on previous tests and quizzes may reappear on your final.

As you move closer to the final, increase the length and depth of your review. Ramp yourself up into a rigorous review of material gradually, but intentionally. By 3-4 days before the final, you ought to be spending significant amounts of time doing significant things each day.

Try to relax before your exams. Listen to some music, take a walk or soak in a bath the night before your exam to try to give your brain a rest from studying and put your body in a more relaxed state. If you've studied, you should be well prepared, so keep telling yourself that you will do just fine. Always think positive and tell yourself that you will pass. Before you begin the exam, take a few deep breaths. Give your best effort and you should do just fine.

The night before the exam, get a good night's sleep, and eat a good breakfast the morning of the exam. Your brain is part of your body. If your body is strung out from lack of sleep and from having no food (or bad food), then your brain will suffer.

Schedule Study Breaks

Don't plan to study non-stop for the next five days. You'll go insane, and you'll be too fried to do well on the exams. When you write your schedule, include short study breaks to help you recharge. You'll feel so much better and will be able to concentrate so much more.

There's a big difference between unhealthy procrastination (wasting time in a random, unplanned fashion) and healthy procrastination (taking scheduled study breaks to relieve your sanity). Healthy procrastination should be a part of your time management strategy. When you schedule your study time, plan to take 10-20 minute study breaks periodically, and do something during these study breaks that rejuvenates you. If possible, work in a short study break every hour. Between study sessions block out a couple of hours of time to relax and forget about your workload for awhile. Here are a few suggestions for both long and short study breaks.

- Take a brisk walk or jog. Physically and psychologically, this is an ideal way to relieve stress, even for a short period of time. Make yourself an energizing "study break mix" on your iPod or MP3 player to energize you during these walks.
- Watch mindless television. Television, of course, can be a procrastination black hole. But in moderation, it's a great way to relax and let your brain take a break. Relax your brain as much as possible and find the most mind-numbing programs out there. Think television of the "it's so bad it's good" variety.
- Read a novel. Students tend to get really sick of books and avoid reading for fun. This is too bad, because reading a novel is a great way to escape your stress and relax. Find a good novel and keep it on your dresser, and read a few chapters when you need a break.
- Watch a funny movie. When you have a busy study schedule, be sure to schedule in an hour or two of time for a longer break. A movie is the perfect way to go. Comedies are relaxing and fun, so choose some of your old favorites.
- Have a study snack. Skipping meals when you're studying will make you grumpy and definitely won't help you study effectively. Make sure you get some nutrition in, as well as some good old fashioned comfort food snacks, especially during exam week.

Some Other Tips

Cramming

Many say "cramming" is not the way to go, as you lose this information fast. If you do cram, it is recommended to do it within 24 hours of your final, so the content is fresh in your head. Review all of your material at least once through to deal with any and all unread materials. You should ensure that you understand all basic concepts before moving on to the next subject.

All-Nighters

Many say try and maintain a "normal" sleeping schedule, however this is almost impossible. Yes, you will be pulling a couple of all-nighters, and you will be fine (maybe just a little worn out after finals week). Just remember to take short breaks in between tasks to give your brain a refresher.

Adapted from:

<http://castingoutnines.wordpress.com/2007/12/05/how-to-prepare-for-final-exams/>

http://collegeuniversity.suite101.com/article.cfm/study_tips_for_final_exams

<http://www.campusgrotto.com/how-to-study-and-prepare-for-finals.html>