

Test Preparation

Gather Information Before You Study



LEARN ABOUT THE EXAM

The more you know, the better you can prepare. Ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ What types of questions will be on the exam: multiple choice, true/false, matching, completion, short answer, essay, or other?
- ◆ How many questions will be on the exam? (Helpful hint: The more questions there will be on a particular chapter, the greater the probability that it will cover not only the main ideas but also specific details from the book and your notes).
- ◆ What material will the exam cover?
- ◆ How much time will you have to complete the exam?
- ◆ Have you taken an exam for this class earlier in the semester? If so, will the exam be similar in style?

The Five-Day Study Plan

SPACE YOUR STUDYING: Most students need to spend eight to ten hours studying to get an A or B on an exam. It's much more effective to study over several days than to cram one day before an exam. Set up a schedule to study at least five days leading up to an exam.

DIVIDE THE MATERIAL: Make a list of the chapters, lecture topics, and outside readings that will be covered on the exam. Then group or chunk them so that you study the lectures and readings covering the same topic at the same time.

STUDY THE OLDEST MATERIAL FIRST: You need to spend more time on the old material because it is not as fresh in your mind. If there is an especially difficult chapter you may need to modify the plan and add some additional time for preparation and review.

PLAN ACTIVE STUDY TASKS: To be well prepared for a college exam, you need to use a variety of active strategies to learn the material. You need to decide what you need to learn, what you already know, and what you need to spend more time on.

MONITOR YOUR LEARNING: As you review the material each day, it is important to test your mastery of it. If you can explain key concepts to yourself or to others, move on; if not, spend more time reviewing.

Use Active Study Strategies

TRY THE 1-HOUR STUDY CYCLE

Set a goal.

1-2 minutes

Decide what you want to accomplish in your study session.

Study with focus.

30-50 minutes

Interact with the material: organize, summarize, process, re-read, fill-in notes, reflect, etc.

Reward yourself!

10-15 minutes

Take a break. Call a friend, play a short game, get a snack, etc.

Review.

5 minutes

Go over what you just studied.

CREATE STUDY TOOLS

Flash cards—Select information (usually technical terminology) and create cards. Write the word on the front and a brief definition and example on the back.

Question cards—Predict what type of information you need to know for the exam. Write the question on the front and the answer on the back.

Study sheets—Create a one-page compilation of all the important information on a particular topic. Put the topic at the top of the sheet. Go through your text and lecture notes for all of the important information about the topic.

Self-tests—Decide what information you need to know for the exam and then formulate questions about it. Use the same type of questions that you expect will be on the exam.

FORM EFFECTIVE STUDY GROUPS

Keep the following tips in mind:

- ◆ It is important to study before you go to a study group so that you can bring your ideas and questions with you.
- ◆ Share ideas, learn from one another, and set a time limit to help the group stay focused.
- ◆ Groups of three to six people are most effective.
- ◆ The best way to know you understand the material is if you teach it to others.

After the Exam

EVALUATE AFTER THE EXAM

Consider the time you spent on the exam, the material you focused on or didn't, and the strategies that you used. Once your exam is returned you can make an even better decision about what worked and what didn't. Evaluating your study plan can help you do better on your next exam.