

PREPARING FOR EXAMS

The best preparation for exams is regular, day-by-day study including revising and learning class notes after every lecture or two, highlighting main ideas, mastering textbook assignments, etc. There should also be a special review a week or a few days before the exam.

1. Plan a realistic schedule and stick to it.

- ✓ Distribute study time over at least two sessions for minor tests and at least four sessions for major exams. Review periods should be relatively brief because recalling and organizing ideas is so fatiguing that efficiency decreases rapidly after about an hour of review. Make sure that you take short breaks so that your concentration span is continually refreshed.
- ✓ Decide how much material must be covered and approximately how long one unit of material will take to be learned. Divide units into time available and note this in a memo book with a study schedule.
- ✓ Don't CRAM! This "method" will only make you more nervous. Specific, planned preparation will prevent last minute cramming and will make you more relaxed and confident as you practice for and take your exam. As well, if you should study a few days before the exam, your long-term memory will store the information much better and more accurately than will your short-term memory.
- ✓ If a problem in another area of your life is distracting you, keep a paper handy for noting flashes of ideas or feelings that recur about the problem; during a break, think through the ideas and possible solutions.

2. Study actively

- ✓ Treat class notes like a textbook chapter. Highlight the main ideas (if you didn't do this when you first reviewed), recite each portion, add new revelations, criticisms, bracket the most important points of all, mark with an arrow the parts least familiar to study, especially on your last review.
- ✓ Build visual aids to clarify and aid memory:
 1. time line
 2. outline map, marking dates and events in appropriate places
 3. summary of dates and events
 4. model of theories
 5. chart of different schools of thought
 6. flow charts, concept maps
- ✓ Build a list of important terms, mark the hardest terms, write out the key words and definitions.

- ✓ Reread portions of the text only if you can't remember the main ideas when you reread the headings.
- ✓ Try using mnemonic devices.
- ✓ Make up exam questions and think through or roughly outline possible answers.
 1. find out whether the exam will have objective or essay type questions.
 2. give yourself practice in thinking about the subject and accustom yourself to an exam situation.
 3. as you go over exam notes, pull out material or note pages with points appropriate for answers.
- ✓ Prepare and study from a master outline formed from reading your lectures, text and supplementary reading, or add notes from your readings to your lecture notes.
- ✓ Note on memo pages or in the margin questions that come to mind about the material.
- ✓ Pretend to teach - or actually arrange to tutor - the subject.
- ✓ Use your imagination to change the point of view from which you think about the subject to heighten your interest and understanding.

3. Study each subject as a unit; combine all notes from all sources on the same subject.

4. Pay special attention to the hardest portions.

- ✓ Testing yourself will help you find weak spots. Make a list and work on these the most.
- ✓ Review the weak spots; master outlines for probable answers before sleeping the night before the exam.

5. Go to bed on time so that your mind will be as fresh as possible for thinking.

- ✓ (Any other occupation involving the mind - reading other material, movies, etc. - tends to interfere with previous learning.) Get some extra sleep two nights before the exam to safeguard against problems in sleeping the night before the exam. Try to keep half an hour before your exam free. Use this time to relax and to do a light review, if necessary.