ULTIMATE EXAM GUIDE

GETTING STARTED

• The first step to success is **attending all of your classes!**
• Approximately one week prior to exams, ensure that all back-due assignments and reviews are completed.
• Cramming is not the answer!
  o Not only do you lose sleep, but you will not remember the information.
  o It’s for emergencies only.
  o You retain only the thin surface layer of information.
  o According to Judy Fishel, “It’s for survival, not success” (p. 82).
• **Create your own study guides/summary sheets** for each class when one isn’t provided.
  o Do this as you learn new information, not just the week before the exam!
  o Simply reorganizing and reviewing your notes can help.
  o This acts as a final review too.
  o Categorization makes remembering information easier.
  o Pick the most important facts from lecture, and then from your book.
  o Don’t be afraid to rearrange information!
    ▪ Instead of chronological, try separating by location or theme.
• Create a study schedule, write it down and actually stick to it! This allows you to manage your time, pace yourself, and avoid cramming.
• Starting your studying earlier provides you with enough time to ask questions of your TA, professor, tutor, or classmate.
• Attend review sessions, whether formal or for a study group.
• **Prioritize your study time:** definitely need to know, probably need to know, unsure if I need to know information.
• **JUST GET STARTED.**

HOW TO STUDY FOR EXAMS

• Study for the **style of exam**:
  o Multiple choice means definitions and concepts.
  o Essays will focus on analysis and application of the concepts that include not only the definitions, but examples.
• Find out what material is actually going to be on the exam. Is it cumulative for the term or just the last few weeks of material?
• If the exam is cumulative, make sure you have questions you missed on previous exams answered.
Use mnemonic devices, like acrostics, rhymes, or acronyms to help you remember information.

- Make sure you can answer the questions at the end of the chapter.
- Quiz yourself by covering your notes and trying to explain them.
- Create flashcards or other aids to help you review materials. Try Quizlet.com, studystack.com, and goconqr.com.
- Practice makes perfect: If there are practice exams available, make sure to take them in similar conditions to the actual exam so you can be prepared.
- Examples, examples, examples.
- Check your textbooks to see if there are any online study aids.

**OBJECTIVE/MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS**

- These tests are recognition exams, where you see the answer. Recalling is answering from your brain, like fill in the blanks and essays.
- Watch out for qualifiers within the statement.
  - 100% Words to Avoid
    - No, none, never, every, always, all, entirely, only, invariably, best and worst
  - In-between Words
    - Usually, seldom, sometimes, few, often, many, most, some, generally, frequently, and ordinarily
- As sentences in the answer choices become longer, the more likely they are to be correct.
- Look for grammar clues:
  - If the subject in the question doesn’t agree with the verb or tense, it’s usually incorrect.
- When in doubt, eliminate at least two answers.
- Always choose an answer!
  - You may guess correctly and gain points. Not answering gets you zero points.
- When all of the above is available as an option, and you are confident at least two of the choices are correct, it is usually correct.
- Check for look-alike answers, and look at their differences. One is usually correct.
- In a matching section:
  - Read all of your options before choosing.
  - Don’t just cross out your answers, match the number of the problem to the letter of the answer.

**TRUE-FALSE STATEMENTS**

- More often than not, these will contain more “true” answers because your professor wants you to know this information!
- Watch out for no, non-, and il-, which turn statements negative.
- If any part of the statement is negative, it will be false!
SHORT ANSWERS AND ESSAYS

- Common essay themes and indicators:
  - Write about main ideas:
    - Summarize, outline, describe, state, list, enumerate, explain, and organize
  - Causal:
    - Outline, list, and describe
  - Opinion:
    - Discuss, reflect, comment, illustrate, critique, evaluate, or give an example
  - Compare and Contrast:
    - Differentiate, cause and effect, detail
- Start your essay by studying the question—analyze it, find all components being asked, and think about how you want to approach it.
  - What kinds of questions does the professor usually ask?
  - What do I want to accomplish in this exam, and how does the time limit affect me?
- Write a game plan!
  - A brief outline
  - A concept map
  - A compare and contrast chart
  - Some form of information organization
- Write an essay that demonstrates your reasoning, knowledge, and writing.
- If you have a small amount of space to write, make sure you have:
  - Your topic sentence
  - Three to five supporting argument points
  - A concluding sentence
- For longer essays, follow the Five Paragraph Model:
  - The first paragraph is an introduction with a topic sentence.
  - Next, the paragraphs will begin with the main idea in the first sentence, and then provide examples.
  - The final paragraph is a conclusion where you restate your main points, restate your topic, and explain your supporting argument.
  - Leave the back of the paper blank in case you remember any additional information to add.
- Make it easy on the grader! Make clear statements in the first sentence, show all your work, and most of all, write neatly!

STUDY TIPS

- Are you an early bird or a night owl? Study the most difficult classes at your best times!
- Using your own words help you assess your comprehension.
  - Teach your classmates, your stuffed animal, or your reflection in the mirror!
- Switch it up!
  - Do this before your eyes glaze over or when you feel yourself getting frustrated: Go to a different subject, take a walk, get a snack, or talk to a friend.
• Color code: **what’s most important**, **less important**, etc. This helps you to prioritize.

• **MAKE IT FUN:**
  - Reward yourself with candy, a sip of coffee, a lap around the library, etc. after you accomplish a task.
  - Reward yourself with activities you enjoy, like x-box, social media, exercise, watching Netflix, etc. when you’re finished studying for the day.

• Link new information to things you already know.
  - These associations will help you remember it later.

• Adding 20 minutes of cardio in your day can not only improve your memory, but increase you energy level while reducing stress!

• Create diagrams, tables, mind maps etc. to help organize information.

• Study in an area that has the least amount of distractions around you.
  - Turn off your phone, TV, e-mail notifications, Facebook notifications, and even text notifications (there are apps for that).

• Choose music without words (movie soundtracks, EDM, classical) that will help you focus on the subject rather than on outside distractions.

• Overlearn the material—even when you think you’re done, **keep going!**

• Review your notes in threefold: **read** them, **rewrite** them, and **say** them aloud.

• Shake up your study spots!
  - Alternating your location can help improve your memory simply by remembering where you studied the information.

• Actually put off procrastination. Try using a pomodoro timer (marinaratimer.com) to break up studying.

• **Finish your papers the week before mid-terms and finals so you can focus on the exams!**

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**EXAM TIME**

• Get there early to get settled and prepared.
  - Get a good location where you can see the clock.

• Be awake for the test—don’t just roll out of bed and go.

• Eat before the test so you’re not focused on how hungry you are rather than the exam.

• Bring additional writing utensils in case a pencil breaks or a pen runs out of ink.
  - Pack all the essentials the night before. (a calculator, notes (if an open note test), water bottle, etc.)
• Wear comfortable clothes.
• Review your notes before the exam to stay fresh.
• When you get the exam:
  o Read the instructions and make a plan—circle, underline, or summarize the question if needed.
  o Skim the entire exam.
  o Get a game plan!
  o Pace yourself.
• Do the easy questions first.
• Don’t leave questions blank! You still have a shot.
• Remember, your answers are the most important: Notes, false starts, and unapplied formulas won’t give you the answer, so make sure you use them!
• Stay until the end of the exam.
  o You may be finished, but use that time to check for errors, especially on essay or short answer portions.
  o Every correction you make in that time is a point gained.
• Last but not least, remember it’s just a test! You’ve studied hard, you’ve got this.

AFTER THE EXAM

• Reward yourself!
• Study the instructor’s feedback to review your errors.
• Correct your mistakes and incorrect answers.
• Analyze your errors:
  o Did you study the wrong material?
  o Did you not study enough?
• Get help! Contact the TA, a tutor, your professor, or your classmates.

STRATEGIES COMPILED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:


