



How to Prepare for Exams

The most important thing you can do to prepare for exams is to start early. If you will study for your courses throughout the semester and stop thinking of studying for exams as an intense and tough activity different from your daily course work, you'll find yourself much better prepared. You'll also experience much less stress!

Studying for exams should include two things:

1. Spaced study – space your study out over several study sessions and over several days
2. Active learning strategies – you must get your brain working

Gather Exam Material

Make a list of chapters, class notes, supplemental readings, etc. that will be covered on the exam. Group these materials by topic, if possible, so that you are able to integrate your class notes and readings. This will make it easier for you to understand the concepts over which you will be tested.

Make a Plan

To make the most of your exam study time, you need to take some time (10-20 minutes) to make a study plan. Based on the amount of material on the exam and the degree to which you've studied all along, decide how many days/study sessions you think you need. Note: You don't want the number of days to be dictated by how many days are left before the exam! It is wise to make your study plan early – even if that means you won't actually implement your plan until sometime in the future.

Count backward from the exam date to decide when to begin. You can skip days, if, for example, you know you have conflict that will prevent you from being able to/wanting to study on a particular day. The only day you are advised not to skip is the day before the exam. Generally, you want to plan to study the oldest material first. In many courses, understanding the older material is essential for understanding the newer material. If you have good reason to deviate from this suggestion, you should do so.

Plan actual tasks: Planning actual tasks is essential to your success. You don't want to plan to

“study” – what does this actually mean? You want to spell out what you will do and be as specific as possible. You need to plan tasks to help you learn the material and you need to plan tasks to help you review the material you’ve already learned. When the time comes, implement your plan.

General Reminders

Gather the materials you need (Scantron, Blue Book, pencil, pen, calculator) the day before the exam.

The night before the exam, you should get a good night’s sleep. This should be easy to do because, if you follow your plan, you should be ready to take the exam.

Eat well before the exam – your brain needs fuel to be able to perform.

Arrive early for the exam as being rushed will only cause stress and excess stress hinders performance