

Academic Resource Center

Test Preparation: 15 Steps

1. Keep up with your reading assignments so that studying before a test will mean reviewing familiar material. Frantic last-minute cramming of new material results in faulty understanding, poor recall, and low exam grades.
2. Complete long-term papers/projects well in advance of scheduled exams so your time will be free for intensive reviewing.
3. Ask the professor what will be covered on an exam: which chapters, lab experiments, lectures, outside readings, etc. Ask questions about confusing material (during class discussions, a professor's office hours, or after class with a classmate or tutor). You can't remember what you don't UNDERSTAND.
4. Plan the time you will spend preparing for the exam; to minimize mental and physical fatigue, plan a 5 or 10 minute break each hour.
5. To avoid rereading text assignments, prepare them for review as you read by underlining key words and phrases or taking notes on major ideas.
6. Review each course once a week throughout the semester: reread class notes, review textbook underlining, review problems solved, etc.
7. Keep, correct, and review all returned quizzes, tests, and papers. See the professor if you are unsure of correct answers to questions you missed.
8. Study the professor's test technique to know what kind of objective questions he or she favors and what sort of essay answer is expected.
9. Prepare a list of likely test questions; turn statements in text and notes into questions. Actually answer each question in your own words.

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10. Concentrate on recalling specific details (who, where, when) to prepare for an objective test; focus on broad concepts for an essay exam.
 11. Reorganize your material to effectively re-process and reinforce. This may require re-writing, which can be an excellent memory aid. For example, if your history notes are arranged chronologically, rearrange them by cause/effect, problem/solution, or biographically. Rearrange math notes by terminology, general principles, definitions, or kinds of examples given.
 12. Change your point of view for deeper understanding and better recall. If you have memorized facts, look now at the application of the facts. If you have been studying Jung's and Freud's psychoanalytic theories, analyze a myth or fairy tale from a Jungian or Freudian viewpoint.
 13. Review likely test questions (from step 9) with others in study groups of 2 to 4 after each person has FIRST studied independently. Test each other, then correct and perfect answers using textbook and pooled lecture notes.
 14. For problem solving tests, review by memorizing formulas and equations you will need and then working numerous examples of each kind of problem likely to appear on the test. Study groups are particularly useful; check each other's work to clarify your own understanding of the process used.
 15. You'll be able to recall more and think more logically if you get enough sleep the night before the test. All-night cramming can backfire by causing your overtired body and mind to "go blank" during the exam. Research shows a **MINIMUM OF FOUR HOURS SLEEP PLUS A PROTEIN MEAL** produce best results.
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