

HOW TO STUDY FOR YOUR FINAL EXAM

Your final exam is not a usual exam. It is designed to determine what you have learned during an entire semester, and therefore you must follow a far more systematic way of study.

- I. **Start at least two weeks prior to the final.** Actually, you should ideally start studying for your final exam from the first day of class. *Get into the mindset that everything you do in class (class attendance, class activities, homework, chapter tests, etc.) are all in preparation for the final exam.*

- II. **Organize your materials.** Sounds silly, but it is so important. Look through all the stuff you have collected for class over the semester; homework, class notes, flash cards, etc. Once you have collected everything, organize it in a logical way. Compare what you have with what your classmates have. If there are things you are missing, get copies.

- III. **Identify trouble areas.** Learn the stuff you didn't really get in the first place. In other words, spend more time reviewing the things you don't know or are unsure of rather than the things you are solid on. Consider your grades throughout the semester.
 - i. If you received a "B" that means you didn't learn 11%-20% of the material.
 - ii. If you received a "C" that means you didn't learn 30% of the material.
 - iii. You can't review what you did not learn in the first place!!

- IV. **Relearn, focusing on trouble areas.** Rework homework problems and class examples. *Get tutoring, and definitely go see your instructor for assistance. However, prior to going to see your instructor make a list of questions you still have and concepts you don't understand. And then take that list with you when you meet with the instructor. You won't believe how impressed your instructor will be and how helpful he/she will be to a student who shows interest and effort.*

- V. **Prioritize information according to its importance.** Separate what HAS to be on the test from what MIGHT be on the test. Doing this will produce two important results:
 - i. You will be investing your time in studying what has the best odds of being on the test in order to reap the greatest rewards; and
 - ii. The act of prioritizing helps you understand how all the material is interrelated. Understanding the "big picture" is very helpful on an exam.

Should you forget a "detail," your understanding of the "big picture" can help you make that all important "educated guess."

- VI. **Test yourself.** An actor would never think of going on stage opening night without having a few "dress rehearsals" beforehand. Replicate the testing environment as closely as possible; lighting, timing, even someone staring at you or making background noises. Retake prior exams and grade yourself. Make up possible test questions; join a study group and share the test questions each member comes up with; or come up with other creative ways of self-testing.
- VII. **Overview study followed by intense study.** Start with an overview of the semester material. Sort out what you are absolutely sure you know. For what's left over, use a strategy of intense study. Rework examples from class notes, redo all homework problems, and go through flashcards until you know them cold!
- VIII. **Now, wrap-up.** Look through everything one more time and ask yourself "Am I ready for this exam?" The answer should NEVER be "I guess." It should either be "Yes" or "No." And, if the answer is "No" the next question you ask yourself should be "Well, what can I do to be able to say 'Yes'."

OK, now you have studied and it is the day of the final. Consider the following tips:

- Get plenty of rest the night before the exam and eat a **healthy** breakfast. A triple Whopper® from BK will take all the blood that should go to your brain and use it for digestion purposes. Not a good idea!
- Arrive at the test early---and ready.
- Choose a good seat far away from all distraction.
- Avoid sharing ideas at the last minute with other students.
- Listen carefully to all directions and/or read all directions carefully. Remember, the most common test taking error is misread directions.
- Read the entire test prior to beginning. You may be able to prioritize areas and complete sections in the order that best suits you. Start with an area in which you feel confident in order to increase your sense of control.

- Do the easiest questions first. Often just reading through the other questions will jog your memory or give you ideas about how to handle the difficult sections.
- The last questions you answer will be:
 - The most difficult
 - Take the greatest amount of writing
 - Have the least point value
- Avoid hurried answers.
- Rephrase difficult questions.
- See the relationship of one question to another and with as many important ideas as you can develop.
- Stay calm and confident throughout the test. If you experience some stress, try closing your eyes and focusing on your breathing for a few seconds.
- Be a "bitter ender" editing, checking, and proofreading your answers. Remember, there is no prize for the first person finished.
- Be careful not to change test answers from correct ones to incorrect ones. Only change answers if you can prove to yourself that the changed answer is correct.

Good luck on those finals! And, remember to **reward yourself after the exam for a job well done.**