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# TIPS FOR TAKING EXAMS

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Exams are inevitable for students, but they don't have to be painful. These tips can help you get ready for and get through your exams. They can also help you prepare for class presentations and in-class assignments.

## **Find Out About the Exam:**

Know your enemy—find out as much as you can about the exam. Here are some questions to ask:

- How much is the exam worth to your overall grade in the class?
- What type of exam is it (multiple choice, essay, open book, take-home, etc.)?
- Will you be given a choice of questions or tasks?

## **Ask for Help:**

Don't feel bad if you need to ask for help. Teachers, peers, study groups, and tutors can help you prepare for your test and help reduce your anxiety. Additionally, by talking to other people, you'll be able to fill in the gaps that you may have in your understanding of the content. If you need extra help, contact the Health & Counseling Center or Disabilities Resource Center.

## **Schedule Your Time Effectively:**

Getting all your gear together makes it easier to find what you need while you're studying. Before starting to review a subject, it helps to do the following:

- Check that you have all of the handouts
- Organize your notes in the most effective way possible
- Read over a course outline of the subjects that will most likely be included on the test
- Write your own summaries of each textbook chapter or section of the subject guide

## **Know Where You're Going:**

Make sure you know where and when the exam will be given. You don't want to miss your exam! Once you know when and where your exam will be, try to study at the same time as your exam. For instance, if you have an early-morning exam, practice getting up and studying earlier in the day.

## **Don't Cram:**

Staying up all night to cram will only increase your stress and decrease your chances of retaining the information. It's better to spread your studying over a longer period of time. If you want to do some

preparation the night before, try to keep it simple. Do a quick review and get to bed early so that you'll feel refreshed and ready for your exam the next day. The following tips will help you avoid overwhelming yourself the night before your test:

- Gather all of your materials together
- Read over your notes one or two times
- Test yourself of key concepts

### **Keep Your Cool:**

Facing up to an exam can be nerve-wracking, but here are some tips to help you stay calm:

- Don't talk too much to other students before the exam (their anxiety is contagious!)
- Try to arrive at your test with time to spare so that you don't feel rushed when you arrive
- Make sure to eat a decent breakfast
- Do things that will make you feel confident (listen to inspiring music, wear your lucky shirt, etc.)

### **Use Your Reading Time:**

The way you use your reading time can really help you make the most of your exam time. Here are some ways to use that time well:

- Read ALL of the instructions carefully
- Scan the whole exam paper and check how many questions there are and how many each is worth
- Plan which questions to answer first (consider starting with questions you're confident about)
- Plan how much time to spend on each answer or section

### **Break Down Your Questions:**

A great tip for any exam is to break down your questions to make sure that you really understand what's being asked. Look for the key parts of the question. For example, look at the following question and how it can be broken into smaller parts: "Explain the difference between study and revision."

1. First, **explain**. Give reasons that illustrate how or why something is the way it is.
2. Second, **discuss the differences**. Show how the items (study and revision) are dissimilar.
3. Third, **discuss the individual items**. Address the concept of "study" define it and discuss its multiple parts. Next, address the concept of "revision."

### **Review Your Answers:**

If you finish the exam early, it's always a good idea to review all of your answers, even if you're confident. Try to review as many answers as you can, but start with the questions that you're least confident about.