

Studying and Exam-writing Strategies

Exam time can be a stressful time of year, especially for new college and university students. For most students, it's not WHAT they have to study that gives them the stress, but HOW to study it. Organize your study time and exam-writing strategies to have a calm and collected exam period.

- 1) **Make sure you have sufficient time to study everything:** Review chapters every week so that you don't have to cram everything in the night before. This is why attending class is so important. If you have questions, go to the instructor weeks before the exam, not the day before.
- 2) **Attend all tutorials:** If there aren't any, find a tutor; it is worth the money. Most instructors will be able to provide you with a list of tutors. Arrive with a list of questions to ask, and make sure the most important ones are covered. If you are still unsure about anything, ask the instructor.
- 3) **Ask the instructor what to expect:** Are there multiple-choice or essay questions? If you know what to expect, you are less likely to panic and go blank during the exam.
- 4) **Get copies of past exams:** Even if the questions aren't recycled, the format may be similar. It can give you an idea of what questions might be asked and which areas to focus on when you're studying. Save one old exam that you haven't even looked at to use as a pre-test. How well you do on this will give you an indication of how prepared you are.
- 5) **Study in the library or someplace quiet:** Sit alone at a desk or in a cubicle. Leave your cell phone, laptop and anything else that will distract you at home. If you aren't the type who can learn by yourself, bring a friend to quiz you.
- 6) **Make a list of all the topics that you need to know:** Cover each of them one by one and cross them off of the list as you become an expert on each one. If it helps, make up a list of possible questions and have a friend quiz you.

- 7) **Create acronyms:** If the answer is in a list, use the first letter of each word. For essay questions, you can either make a list of the key points or key words to use throughout the essay.
- 8) **Go to bed early:** It is important to be well rested for an exam. Any time spent studying while you are exhausted will be wasted anyway, as you are less likely to retain the information. Wake up early, have a well-balanced breakfast and review your notes before the exam.
- 9) **Read through the exam before you start:** Sometimes, later questions can give you hints or trigger your memory for earlier questions. Answer the easiest questions first. Don't panic if you don't know the answer right away; move on to the next question and come back to the ones you missed later on.
- 10) **If time allows, make a brain map before you even look at the exam:** Take the first five minutes to write down everything you can remember, including all of the acronyms you created while studying, on a scrap piece of paper or the back of the exam.
- 11) **Use correct grammar and write legibly:** If the instructor cannot understand what you are trying to say, he or she cannot grade your exam.
- 12) **If you are unsure of what a question is asking for, ask the instructor to clarify:** Don't be afraid to ask, because other people are probably wondering the same thing.
- 13) **Divide your time and don't rush:** Some instructors will even give you suggested time allotments for questions. Spend the most time on the questions that are worth the most. Make sure to leave enough time to answer all questions.
- 14) **Even if you only know part of the answer, write it down:** Most instructors give partial marks, and sometimes that partial mark can be the difference between a pass and a fail or an A and an A+.

Remember to plan ahead so that you aren't cramming everything in at the last minute. Over preparation for an exam trumps under preparation every time.

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© 2010 Colette Robicheau
The Organizing Coach
Organize Anything
Phone: (902) 233-1577 Fax: (902) 455-0553

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