

Effective Study and Test Taking Strategies

Maximize your efforts!



Use Active Study Strategies

This means involving your senses and thinking consciously about your studying. Active studying increases your memory and understanding of the material.

- Verbalize information instead of reading silently: this increases sensory input to the brain.
- Re-organize the course material in a logical way - how do the concepts fit together? Try creating a 'concept map.'
- Teach the material to someone else. This is one of the best ways to learn it yourself.
- Use the 3R's: Read, Write, Recite the material.
- Involve physical movement or senses where appropriate.



Predict Questions

Students generally spend too much study time taking in information and not enough time practising how to use this information in the exam format. Predicting questions and answering them will help you to consider what will be on the exam and give you practice in answering the types of question that you'll be facing.

- Use the course outline, previous tests, course notes, and any information given by the instructor to make up possible test questions, then practise answering these questions.
- Try this strategy with a study partner, trading questions to give you a new perspective.
- Set a time limit that reflects the amount of time you will have in the exam.
- Make sure to correct your answers, and then focus your studying on the areas in which you made the most mistakes.



Find a Study Partner or Form a Study Group

Working with someone else can give you a different perspective on course materials, and a lot can be accomplished by sharing skills and resources with others. Some suggested activities for group studying:

- Practise teaching each other the material.
- Brainstorm possible test questions.
- Compare lecture notes.

- Conduct discussions or debates on selected course topics.
- Quiz each other on factual material.
- Join one of the study groups opportunities offered by the guidance office next week.



Create Diagrams to Help Summarize Information

- Brainstorm ideas/concepts that are related to a chosen topic.
- Draw a diagram to provide a pictorial representation of the subject.
- Try a concept map with the most important idea in the centre, and then various branches showing the relationships between other ideas and their subcategories.



Use Strategies to Help Reduce Forgetting

- Test yourself as you study.
- Over-learn the material so that you can't forget it.
- Use mnemonics
 - acronyms (BEDMAS)
 - analogies (lungs = trees, pump = heart)
 - key words linked to other information



Try Flashcards

- Write the question on one side, the answer on the other.
- Use them to memorize definitions, vocabulary, facts, formulae, etc.
- Carry them with you to study in short, spare moments, such as while waiting in line or riding the bus.

Exam Vocabulary

1. **Compare:** Note the similarities and differences
2. **Contrast:** Compare to highlight differences
3. **Criticize:** Judge and discuss the good and bad points
4. **Define:** Explain or identify and make it long enough to fully explain the word.
5. **Evaluate:** Analyze carefully and give reasons for and against
6. **Explain:** Make the meaning of something clear and understandable
7. **Illustrate:** Use specific examples or analogies to explain
8. **Relate:** Give an account of events and or circumstances to establish association, connections or relationships
9. **Summarize:** State the main facts in concise form

◆◆ TEST TAKING TIPS ◆◆

- When reading your text book, start at the end of the chapter. Read the summary first. Highlight or take brief notes so you will know what you're reading for.

- Review regularly what you have learned - we forget 75-90% of what we have learned, if not reviewed.
- You will remember more if you study in short sessions, e.g. a series of 15-20 minute focus sessions, with a 5 minute break in between each is often more effective.



Multiple Choice Questions:

- Try to answer the question yourself before looking at the answers given.
- Underline key words. This can help you untangle complicated questions.
- Cross out the answers you know are incorrect and select your answers from the remaining options.
- Never leave a question unanswered unless there is penalty for incorrect answers.



Essay Questions:

- If you have a choice, read all the questions over carefully before choosing one. Make sure you are answering the teacher's question.
- You can develop a good thesis statement by turning the exam question into a statement followed by 3-4 points.
- Use lots of examples from the course material to prove your points. Generally speaking the more you write the better!
- Write a conclusion (a few statements that tie in your thesis and supporting points).



Math, Science and Tech Exams:

- Show all your work, it will get you part marks
- Look at your final answer and see if it's reasonable
- When studying, go through past homework assignments, tests and your textbook and copy out problems. Mix them up and solve as many as possible.