

Test-Preparation Tips

- **Start preparing for exams from the first day of class.** Employ an effective note taking system. Review course material regularly. Transfer information to be learned onto note cards and review a few of them every day (all it takes is a few minutes).
- **Create a study checklist.** Make a *brief* list of everything you will need to know. List all chapters, reading assignments, and handouts covered on exam. List types of problems you need to be able to solve. List other skills, concepts, theories, formulas, equations. As the exam nears – **at least five days before the exam** – start setting aside bigger blocks of time to study info on the list.
- **Prioritize.** Devote more time to more difficult or complex material and material you're least familiar with. Try writing out information you need to know without looking at your notes to see how much you remember and how much you have to review.
- **Always find out what kind of exam you will be having** (multiple choice, short answer, essay, etc.). If the syllabus does not say what kind of test the professor will be giving, ask!
- **Give yourself practice exams.** Ask your professors for any old tests (or tests on file) to give yourself as much practice as possible in a real testing situation. If a professor cannot provide you with sample tests, ask him or her to provide you with a few example questions so you will have a better feel for the kinds of questions you will actually encounter on the tests.
- **If you are preparing for a multiple choice exam,** write out some of your notes as multiple choice questions, or ask a classmate to do it for you. Look for **key terms** and **concepts**. Identify terms that could be confused in a multiple choice question on an exam and be sure that you are prepared to know the difference between them. Answer these questions as if you were really taking the test.
- **If you are preparing for an essay exam,** go through your notes and pull out main ideas, concepts and themes. Anticipate possible test questions based on your text organization and lecture discussions. Write out your anticipated questions, outline an answer, then practice writing out the answer you would provide on an essay test. If you are unsure of your anticipated questions, show them to your professor to see if you are on the right track. Remember that this strategy requires studying ahead of time!
- **Take care of yourself and avoid pulling all-nighters!** Prepare far enough in advance that you are able to actually relax the night before a test. Finish studying early. Get in a good workout. Eat a healthy meal. Do something fun. Get to bed early and rise in enough time to have a good breakfast. Take care of your body and you will also take care of your mind. You will be focused, relaxed and ready to do your best.
- **If you suffer from exam anxiety,** practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or visualizing yourself doing well on the test. Enter the room right before the start of the test to avoid becoming stressed by the people in the hall still cramming for the test.