

Preparing for Exams

By actively reviewing new material throughout the semester, you will store it in your long-term memory, which will give you a strong base from which to begin your final preparation for the exam. Use the strategies for Getting the Most Out of Attending Class (page 59) to develop a strong understanding of the material.

Each week, actively review new material in short study sessions. After you are confident that you understand the new material, set it aside and go on to something else.

The next day, test yourself to see how much you remember. If you are not comfortable with your recall of the material, actively review it again.

The following day, come back and test yourself. As you learn the material, gradually increase the time between study sessions.

Start studying at least a week before an exam/paper is due. One of the biggest mistakes students make when it comes to studying is trying to study the night before. One night of studying—even two—will not be enough to do well on an exam. Instructors are often looking for two things when they give exams: your ability to store information, and your ability to apply information to brand new scenarios. Storing information involves starting one-to-two weeks in advance, and studying material in chunks (rather than trying to study everything every time you study). Studying far in advance will also help you to internalize the concepts, so that when you encounter a new kind of question, you can better apply the material.

Keep the following 7-day study plan in mind (although some exams will need more than one week of preparation). Study a **maximum** of 2 hours at a time per subject, and attend any review sessions offered during the week.

Day 1:	Organize all your notes, handouts, and materials you'll need to cover. Check to see if anything is missing. Prioritize what will be most important to study through what is least important to study. Divide your study materials into at least <u>three sections</u> (sometimes the teacher does this automatically through the course units—you might divide by date, topics, etc.). You can also break this down by “lecture notes” and “book notes.” *Some students re-write or re-type their class notes at this point; others find this strategy unhelpful.
Day 2:	Study/review all the materials for the <u>first section</u> you identified, both in the course book(s) and in your own notes. (If you are breaking things down by lecture/book, study one or the other).
Day 3:	Study all the material in the <u>second section</u> .
Day 4:	Study all the material in the <u>third section</u> (if relevant).
Day 5:	Meet with a partner or small group to compare notes, formulate possible test questions, and quiz each other. Review ALL material.
Day 6:	Study/review your weakest sections.
Day 7:	Study/review ALL material, possibly with a group.

Tips: Think positively! Get a full night's sleep the night before an exam. Eat light, and eat healthy (choose something like oatmeal and fresh fruit, not cold pizza and Gatorade) before the exam to keep the blood circulating to your brain. **And, most importantly, spend 5-10 minutes after difficult classes reviewing your notes, and 30 minutes each week reviewing the whole week's notes.** This will make a BIG difference in your ability to ace the material and study effectively.