

Study Tips for University Exams

It is important to take your exams seriously, but not so seriously that they distress or discourage you. Everyone develops their own approach to writing and preparing for exams, which comes with practice. What follows are some tips to help you find exam strategies that work for you.

Before the Exam

- Start thinking about your exam and what will be on it at least a week or two in advance.
- Don't worry about mastering all the material, but think critically about what material needs to be learned and what you need to do to learn it. This way you get a sense of how much work needs to be done without the panic of cramming it into the last minute.
- Once you have established how much studying you need to do, set aside some time each day to study. Dividing it into manageable stretches of time is much less daunting than a night-before marathon session.
- Don't study for excessively long periods of time. An hour or two a day should be fine if you start in advance. Take breaks so that you don't burn yourself out. We all need time to relax.
- Know what kind of studying works for you. Some people study well in groups; others prefer to work alone. Find something that fits your style and stick with it.
- If you get stuck on some material, don't just pass over it or get frustrated. Get help; ask your professor to clarify a concept, or try discussing it with other classmates.
- Don't be shy about visiting a help centre on campus. Help centres are there for your academic and personal assistance, not to make you feel stupid or incompetent. If anything, utilizing help centres is a sign of motivation and intelligence.
- If you have access to previous exams, use them as practice tests.
- Eat well, sleep regularly, and have fun when you are not studying (not that you can't have fun when you *are* studying). Don't let an exam disrupt the rhythm of your life negatively and change how you care for your health.
- Above all else, be confident in your ability to learn. We all learn differently, and that can present both challenges and opportunities; learning to see challenges as opportunities for growth is essential in achieving success.

The Night Before

- Use your last study session as a confidence booster. Remind yourself of what you already know. Resist cramming material at the last minute.
- Review the exam format, and think about what kinds of questions you might be asked to answer.
- Take time for yourself, and go to bed early. Sleep will help you digest and better communicate your knowledge of the material.

Day of the Exam

- On the morning of your exam, eat a nutritious breakfast, and, if you have time, it is a good idea to do some physical activity before the exam. By taking care of our bodies, we sharpen our minds.
- Make sure you give yourself enough time to get to the exam with all the necessary materials and without panic.
- Bring a bottle of water with you when you write the exam. Staying hydrated helps to maintain focus. Also, chewing gum can help improve concentration, but do it quietly so you don't disrupt the concentration of those around you.
- Read over the exam, and pay attention to how marks are allocated. Make sure you consider how many marks questions are worth as you decide how much time to spend on each question.
- If you are stumped by a question, move on and come back to it when you are done. Don't let it rattle your confidence; the answer may come to you.
- Hand in the exam when you are confident that you have given it your best. Use all the time that's given to you. It's not a race!
- If the exam doesn't go as well as you'd hoped, take it as an opportunity to reflect on your learning rather than as an indication of failure. Some say that failure only occurs when we lose our willingness to improve.

Study Smarter, Not Harder!