

Preparing for Midterm and Final Exams

How Can I Learn All This Material?

1. Start Early or Start Now!

- * Collect and organize key materials
- * Integrate lecture material with text notes and labs or assignments
- * Look for connections, how ideas fit together
- * Summarize information and generate test questions. Reading isn't enough!

2. Match depth of thinking with test formats

- * Multiple choice, short answer exams:
 - memorize details
 - understand connections to see the "big picture"
 - focus on concepts
- * Problem solving exams:
 - develop accuracy and speed in calculations. Do practice questions
 - identify concepts, and related applications
- * Essay exams:
 - analyze themes, patterns
 - interpret and evaluate information
 - outline sample essays: include several PIE (point/interpretation/evidence or example)

3. Summarize the material

Choose a summary method that relates to the material being studied.

- ✓ If there is a pattern or *repeated structure* to the material (e.g. personality theories, or body systems) TRY making a chart
- ✓ If *relationships* are emphasized between ideas (.e.g. primary ideas/secondaryideas /details) TRY creating a web, mind map or concept map
- ✓ If *memorizing* of details is emphasized TRY using cue cards
- ✓ If *quantitative problem-solving* is required, TRY using a Quantitative Concept Summary to systematically summarizing key information in addition to doing calculations.
- ✓ If narrative or descriptive material is emphasized, TRY using a Cornell note

4. Recite, Recite, Recite!

5. Test Yourself

- * Refer to the Learning Objectives to determine key topics and information
- * Use homework and assignments, and old exams, for sample questions
- * Think like your prof.- design your own test questions (not multiple choice!) and answer them

How can I prepare for so many exams?

Plan:

- * Estimate the study hours needed per course
- * Divide the material for each course into several parts
- * Distribute your learning over several days, for each course
- * Study the hardest course first: focus on what you don't know

Act:

- * Each study block: review, study new chunk of material, self-test
- * Study courses at same time of day as the exam is scheduled, if classes allow
- * If you have several exams, expect to study for about 2-3 weeks for finals
- * During mid-terms: assign times for regular term work plus studying (10 – 20 hours/ course)

Believe:

- * You CAN do it 😊

What if I have to cram?

- * Draw a mind map of the whole course, to get the “big picture” overview
- * Refer to the learning objectives in the course syllabus to determine key concepts
- * Pick out a few of the most important concepts and *learn them cold*.
- * Calm your mind while studying—you are more likely to forget material if you are tense.
- * Be positive: every mark counts.
- * Remember how this feels, and avoid it next time!

Maintain a good “training regimen”

- * Stay positive: “this too shall pass”
- * Take down time, without guilt
- * Sleep, eat and exercise
- * Train with a “study partner”
- * Celebrate after the last exam

24 hours without sleep lowers your next day's performance to the equivalent of being legally drunk!

How do I know I'm prepared?

- ✓ Teach someone
- ✓ Test yourself, in timed conditions
- ✓ Generate “deep” questions from course outline or learning objectives
- ✓ Old tests or exams
- ✓ Homework assignments
- ✓ Review problems
- ✓ Textbook questions

For more tools and strategies go to

<http://www.queensu.ca/learningstrategies/undergrad/examprep/module.html>