

# Strategies for Studying for Mid-Terms and Final Exams

(adapted and revised from *Study Strategies Made Easy*)

## 1. Get a Head Start Two Weeks Before the Exam.

- a. *Find out all that you can about the exam.*
  - i. In class, listen for the teacher's clues and signals as to which material might be included on the tests. If the teacher doesn't give you hints, ask him or her directly what to expect on the test.
  - ii. Find out which type of format the test will be.
    1. If objective only, review and memorize important details.
    2. If subjective only, learn overall concepts, but memorize enough facts to back them up in an essay.
  - iii. Find out if you can bring notes into the exam and, if so, how many you can use (size, type, etc.)
  - iv. Find out if any of the chapters/units/materials that were covered in class will not be on the final. However, unless the teacher tells you exactly what will not be included, it's safer to study every chapter and all material.
- b. *Start the preparation.*
  - i. Get out your notes, old tests, etc. and organize them now.
  - ii. Make sure that you have something from every unit that will be on the test (outlines, lecture notes, etc.) If you are missing anything, see if you can copy a friend's notes for study purposes.
  - iii. Consider creating flashcards. This works great for vocabulary words and their definitions or for asking a question on one side and answering it on the other.
  - iv. Make up a study schedule to follow for the duration of time leading up to the test, trying to begin at least two weeks out.
- c. *Organize your study sessions.*
  - i. Follow the study schedule and pace yourself so that you can study a little each day.
    1. Divide the number of chapters or pages to cover by the number of days you have set aside to study.
    2. Study each subject for a half hour before breaking and beginning the next.
  - ii. As you review the textbook, also review the lecture notes and clues from the teacher.
  - iii. Review old tests since the same questions (possibly worded differently) may show up again. If the material was important enough to test you on once, it may be important enough to show up on a final.
  - iv. For each chapter, concentrate on highlighted material (you may need to highlight your notes first) and recall questions (self-created or from a textbook or teacher-generated study guide).
  - v. Focus on what you don't know rather than continually reviewing what you do know.
  - vi. Consider asking a parent, guardian, sibling or friend to quiz you. Seek a serious study partner.
- d. *Remember to use your strongest learning style and preferences.*
  - i. Auditory learners may want to read study materials aloud or tape record notes or recall questions to listen to later.
  - ii. Visual learners may want to picture the look of a page or make associations. Sometimes it helps to physically draw a picture or symbol to help with recall.
  - iii. Kinesthetic learners may want to rewrite information (e.g., brief summary outlines or charts).
  - iv. Study during the times and in the environments that will help you focus best. Only study with a partner if you are really going to study.

## 2. Cramming.

- a. *If you have studied leading up to your exam the way you should, you won't have to cram, but just in case...*
- b. *What is cramming and how can you use it?*
  - i. Cramming is really stuffing as much information into your head as possible just before you need to use it, such as the night before or the morning of a test.
  - ii. Unfortunately, cramming only works for very brief periods and for very small amounts of information, so it is not an efficient study strategy.
  - iii. If you find that you absolutely must cram, don't try to read and remember every bit of information from the chapters and notes. Rely upon your highlighted information, vocabulary, and recall questions. This will be the most important information, and you can cram it into your memory in the shortest amount of time.

## 3. Final Words About Final Exams.

- a. *Successful test takers relax before exams. They go to sleep early, wake up in time to eat a nutritious breakfast and get to school on time without rushing, and pump themselves up with confident attitudes.*