

## Exam Preparation Strategies

Physical and mental preparation for an exam is all about balance. If you study so much that you forget to eat or sleep well, you are hurting your ability to do well on an exam. If you study so much that you burn out, you will do just as badly as if you hadn't studied at all. Remember to take breaks. Just because it's an exam period doesn't mean you can't hang out with friends, or go for that jog, or take an hour off to prepare a nice meal. To accomplish these activities, time management is essential. You must be able to work out an effective study schedule and start your studying early. You should block out time to study and make sure to take regular breaks.

### Physical Preparation

The way you treat your body during exams directly affects your performance on exams. If you're not looking after yourself, you won't perform your best in an exam. Take care of yourself and make sure that you prepare physically for an exam. Your body is a machine which is used to certain patterns and schedules. Don't interrupt these for an exam.

- Sleep well and get your normal amount of sleep (hopefully around 8 hours). Maintain your sleep schedule. If you normally sleep at midnight and wake up at 8am, keep doing that.
- Don't pull late night study sessions or all-nighters; they will have a negative effect on your body. When you're too tired, you're not learning as much for the time you're putting in.
- Maintain your exercise schedule. If your body is used to jogging every morning, make sure it gets that jog. If you don't normally exercise, don't start now.
- Maintain your eating habits. Don't skip any meals and eat healthily.

### Mental Preparation

Just as important as physical preparation is your mental preparation. Cramming for exams leads to stress and fatigue. Properly preparing yourself for an exam is vital to your success.

- Start studying well in advance. This will move information to long term memory, and you will have less pre-exam stress and anxiety.
- Don't rush. Actively review your study notes calmly and with focus; rushing will only mean you absorb less information and need to spend more time studying overall.

- Clarify all the details in advance. Know what sort of questions to expect, where the exam will be held, etc.
- Have a positive attitude. Being positive about the outcome will always lead you to do better on any examination. It will also make studying a whole lot easier. Remind yourself why you need good grades, or why you are interested in the subject.

## **Learning Preparation**

### *Anticipating the Questions*

This is a helpful approach for all types of exams:

- For multiple choice, try to think of things which relate to each other and make sure you can properly distinguish their differences.
- For short answer questions, create a list of theories, terms, or concepts and make sure you can explain them all briefly.
- For objective test questions like matching or true/false, generate your own practice lists or challenge yourself to come up with two lies and a truth.
- For essay exams, try to think of larger themes of the course to ask a question about. Alternatively, you can identify concepts that can be compared and contrasted.

### *How to Study*

It is very useful to study in the form in which you'll be tested. If you have anticipated questions, you're already on track for this kind of rehearsal. Be sure to think about the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy as these can help ensure that you're coming up with a good variety of questions. Refer to our series of Bloom's Taxonomy handouts for more details.

### *Group Studying*

One of the best methods for studying is to form a study group. Talking about course concepts and asking questions helps you engage with the material, though each member needs to prepare in advance. Also, as a group, everyone can contribute some anticipated practice questions and by pooling them, you can create a practice test for yourselves.

## **Dealing with more than one exam**

Students are not always able to have their exams easily spread out across the exam period. Sometimes you will have two exams in 48 hours or a lot of exams in a very short period. This situation is unavoidable, and you must adjust your studying accordingly. It is in these moments when time management and calm study habits are especially important. Don't stress out, approach your multiple exams as calmly as you can, but do realize that you will have to study in a much more focused manner.