TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

PREPARING FOR TEST BEFORE YOUR FINAL REVIEW

1. Early in the course find out:
   a. The type of exams (e.g., essays vs. multiple choice)
   b. The date of the exams
   c. The scope of the exams (e.g., Are you responsible for dates? Formulas? Derivations?)
   d. Where the exam material comes from (i.e., how much from each book and how much from the lectures)

2. Pay special attention to:
   a. Things the professor says will be on the test
   b. Material that is not in the book
   c. Terms, diagrams, etc., that were put on the board

3. Schedule intermediate reviews:
   a. Recite from your lecture notes
   b. Take notes on text and recite from these notes
   c. This prevents a marathon review
   d. This strengthens the memory trace

4. Use old tests as study aids:
   a. Examine old midterms and final exams from previous semesters (they may be on file at the library or at the department office)
   b. Find someone who has taken the course and ask him/her about professor’s style
   c. Analyze the professor’s testing style (i.e., does s/he like creativity or memorization, main points or details)
   d. Use old exams as practice test questions

5. Use earlier midterms
   a. Analyze your mistakes
      ● Did you misread the question?
      ● Did you fail to get something important into your notes?
   b. Note the grader’s comments
   c. Analyze the professor’s testing style
**Final Review Before an Exam**

1. **Review**
   a. Take notes on test material if you haven't already. (Consider flash cards.) Use your underlining as a guide and be very selective.
   b. Recite from your lecture notes and text notes
   c. Make summary sheets of the most important material and any important unlearned material (or separate cards into piles of cards "to learn" and "learned")
   d. Recite from your summary sheets (or cards "to learn")
   e. Make "summary of summary" sheets of any material still unlearned (or continue to separate flash cards)
   f. Recite from these
   g. Make "summary of summary of summary" sheets (or separate flash cards further)

2. **Memorize lists**
   To memorize lists on your summary sheets, use mnemonic acronyms (e.g. VISTA—Volunteers in Service to America), and mnemonic sentences (Every Good Boy Does Fine—E G B D F, the lines on the Treble Staff in music)

3. **Perhaps meet with other students**
   a. Find one, two or three well-prepared students
   b. Have an organized agenda to compare perceptions of the main points and possible essay questions
   c. Don't get bogged down on minor points
   d. Don't take someone else's word on a point you're not sure about--look it up later

4. **Pay special attention to:**
   a. Material from the early part of the course
   b. Confusing material
   c. Concepts and principles

5. **Anticipate test questions for essay tests**
   a. Prepare main point outlines for anticipated questions (or even write out essays)
      i. Include a couple of specific details
      ii. Write out possible questions
   b. Don't expect to be able to anticipate all the questions

6. **Get a decent amount of sleep**

7. **Eat something** (fruit, cereal, sandwich, granola bar)
If you Have to Cram

1. For an essay test
   a. Recite from and review your lecture notes.
   b. Survey the readings
      i. Read the chapter summaries carefully
      ii. Get a general idea of the main points of the reading
      iii. Don’t leave out whole chapters or major sections of the reading
      iv. Take notes on the highlights of all your notes
   c. Take summary notes of the highlights of all your notes. Recite from these summary notes.

2. For an objective test
   a. Recite from and review your lecture notes. Take summary notes and recite from them
   b. Learn new terms
   c. Read as much as you can

3. Get some sleep

The Day of the Exam

1. Psyche yourself up—be confident!

2. In the morning:
   a. Set an alarm clock with enough time to get to the exam without worrying
   b. Have the proper materials:
      i. 2 pencils and 2 similar pens
      ii. Eraser
      iii. Any books or notes that are allowed
         1. Put bookmarks at important pages
         2. Keep list on inside cover of pages with important tables, etc.
      iv. Glance over your notes
      v. Relax on campus immediately before the test
      vi. Avoid conversations about the subject matter
      vii. Don’t study the last hour before the test
      viii. Eat something light

3. Get to the exam room early enough to:
   a. Get a good seat
   b. Glance over your notes a final time
**How to Take Objective Tests**

1. **Survey the test**
   a. How long is it?
   b. Are you missing any pages?
   c. What types of questions are there?
   d. Survey the readings

2. **Write the halfway time and halfway question number**

3. **Write out any memorized lists**

4. **Read the directions carefully**
   a. Is there a penalty for guessing? (If not, answer all questions.)
   b. Are all the questions weighted equally?
   c. For multiple choice, is there only one correct answer?

5. **Answer easy questions first**

6. **When answering questions:**
   a. Underline dogmatic terms. These statements are usually false because few things in the world meet the requirement of always, never, best, worst…
   b. True / False – Be careful of statements with two clauses.
      i. If statement contains “and” both clauses must be true for the statement to be true
      ii. If statement contains “or” only one clause must be true for the statement to be true
   c. Fill-in – if you blank out, write in anything
   d. Matching – read all items before making matches
   e. Multiple Choice –
      i. Try to recall the answers before reading the choices
      ii. Select the best choice

7. **Check your answers**
   a. Use all the time allowed
   b. Rework questions if you have time
      i. First, work on any unanswered questions
      ii. Then, rework questions you’re unsure of
      iii. Finally, rework the rest of the questions

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