

## Study Skills Help & Study Tips

- ✓ Everyone is different. Different methods work for different people; the following are only suggestions on improving upon your current studying techniques.
- ✓ It is best to review the material right after class when it's still fresh in your memory.
- ✓ Don't try to do all your studying the night before the test. Instead space out your studying, review class materials at least several times a week, focusing on one topic at a time.
- ✓ Have all of your study material in front of you: lecture notes, course textbooks, study guides and any other relevant material.
- ✓ Find a comfortable and quiet place to study with good lighting and little distractions (try avoiding your own bed; it is very tempting to just lie down and take a nap).
- ✓ Start out by studying the most important information.
- ✓ Learn the general concepts first, don't worry about learning the details until you have learned the main ideas.
- ✓ Take notes and write down a summary of the important ideas as you read through your study material.
- ✓ Take short breaks frequently. Your memory retains the information that you study at the beginning and the end better than what you study in the middle.
- ✓ Space out your studying, you'll learn more by studying a little every day instead of waiting to cram at the last minute. By studying every day, the material will stay in your long-term memory but if you try to study at the last moment, the material will only reside in your short-term memory that you'll easily forget.
- ✓ Make sure that you understand the material well, don't just read through the material and try to memorize everything.
- ✓ If you choose to study in a group, only study with others who are serious about the test.
- ✓ Test yourself or have someone test you on the material to find out what your weak and strong areas are. You can use the review questions at the end of each chapter, practice tests that the teacher may give out or other pertinent materials.
- ✓ Listening to relaxing music such as classical or jazz on a low volume can relieve some of the boredom of studying.
- ✓ Don't study later than the time you usually go to sleep, you may fall asleep or be tempted to go to sleep, instead try studying in the afternoon or early evening. If you are a morning person try studying in the morning.

## Note Taking Strategies and Skills

- ✓ If the instructor writes something on the chalkboard/overhead or repeats an idea then it is usually a key point and you should write it down.
- ✓ Try to use a three-ring binder, it allows for more flexibility in rearranging your notes and any handouts that you may receive.
- ✓ Try to sit towards the front and center of the class where you'll be less distracted and can hear the professor the best and have a good angle on any visual aids that may be shown.
- ✓ Don't rely on someone else's notes, you may not understand everything that they write down and you'll learn the best by taking your own notes.
- ✓ If your instructor talks fast, it may help to bring an audio recorder and record the lecture while taking notes. After the lecture is over you can replay the lecture and fill in any parts that you missed in your notes.
- ✓ Do reading assignments or homework questions before class, it is easier to take notes when you know what the instructor is talking about.
- ✓ Date your notes. Add titles and subtitles when you move onto a new topic for easy referencing.
- ✓ Write down any terminology along with the definition that the instructor may present.
- ✓ Make sure that you write legibly, if you can't read them later, they'll be useless. If you have sloppy handwriting it may be wise to type your notes so that they are easier to read.
- ✓ If you missed what the instructor said, ask them to repeat it or go to the instructor after class and ask for clarification. If you are in a rush, ask the instructor at the beginning of the next class or try to find the answer from a friend or the text.
- ✓ Compare notes with a classmate to make sure you didn't miss any important points.

## Cramming Techniques for Exams

Cramming for exams should be avoided at all costs. You should only cram for an exam as a last resort. It's hard to take in and retain a large amount of information in a short period of time. Some of the tips on studying and preparing for a test may overlap with the cramming techniques below.

- ✓ Eat some food to give you energy to study but avoid consuming excess sugar which will make you hyper and will make it more difficult to study.
- ✓ An apple does a better job at keeping you focused and awake than caffeine.
- ✓ Find a well lit place with no distractions around to study but don't get too comfortable or you may fall asleep.
- ✓ Keep a positive attitude, it is easier to study when you are relaxed than when you are stressed out.
- ✓ Since your time is limited, you have to choose what you study. Don't attempt to learn everything, focus on things that will get you the most points on the exam.
- ✓ Focus on the main ideas and learn key formulas. Skip the details for now and only come back to them if you see that you have time after you have learned the key points.
- ✓ Write down the key ideas/formulas on a sheet of paper and keep on studying from that sheet, repetition is important.
- ✓ Highlight the important points in your notes, and text and focus on that.
- ✓ Read the chapter summaries (they usually do a good job at summarizing the important points). If there're no chapter summaries then skim through the text and write down key ideas.
- ✓ Study from past tests, review questions, homework & review sheets.
- ✓ Take at least one five minute break an hour so that you can gather your thoughts and let your brain relax.
- ✓ If time permits, try to get at least 3 hours of sleep (one sleep cycle) before the exam so that you don't fall asleep when taking your exam. Don't forget to set your alarm!

## Reducing Test Taking Anxiety

Test anxiety is when a student excessively worries about doing well on a test. This can become a major hindrance on test performance and cause extreme nervousness and memory lapses among other symptoms. The following are tips on reducing test taking anxiety.

- ✓ Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test taking anxiety.
- ✓ Space out your studying over a few days or weeks and continually review class material. Don't try to learn everything the night before.
- ✓ Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test.
- ✓ Exercising for a few days before the test will help reduce stress.
- ✓ Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- ✓ Show up to class early so you won't have to worry about being late.
- ✓ Chew gum (if allowed) during the test to help relieve test anxiety.
- ✓ Stay relaxed, if you begin to get nervous take a few deep breaths slowly to relax yourself and then get back to work.
- ✓ Read the directions slowly and carefully.
- ✓ If you don't understand the directions on the test, ask the teacher to explain it to you.
- ✓ Skim through the test so that you have a good idea how to pace yourself.
- ✓ Write down important formulas, facts, definitions and/or keywords in the margin first so you won't worry about forgetting them.
- ✓ Do the simple questions first to help build up your confidence for the harder questions.
- ✓ Don't worry about how fast other people finish their test; just concentrate on your own test.
- ✓ If you don't know an answer to a question skip it for the time being (come back to it later if you have time), and remember that you don't have to always get every question right to do well on the test.
- ✓ Focus on the question at hand. Don't let your mind wander on other things.
- ✓ If you're still experiencing extreme test anxiety after following these tips, seek help from your school counselor.

## Test Preparation Tips

- ✓ Preparation for your first test should begin on the first day of class; this includes paying attention during class, taking good notes, studying, completing homework assignments and reviewing study materials on a regular basis.
- ✓ Budget your time, make sure you have sufficient time to study so that you are well prepared for the test.
- ✓ Go to review sessions, pay attention to hints that the instructor may give about the test. Take notes and ask questions about items you may be confused about.
- ✓ Ask the instructor to specify the areas that will be emphasized on the test.
- ✓ Make sure you go to the class right before the test; it's another prime time for the instructor to give out more hints or the format of the test.
- ✓ Go over any material from practice tests, HW's, sample problems, review material, the textbook, class notes...
- ✓ Eat before a test. Having food in your stomach will give you energy and help you focus but avoid heavy foods which can make you groggy.
- ✓ Don't try to pull an all nighter. Get at least 3 hours of sleep before the test (normally 8 hours of sleep a night is recommended but if you are short on time, get at least 3 hours so that you'll be well rested enough to focus during the test).
- ✓ Put the main ideas/information/formulas onto a sheet that can be quickly reviewed many times, this makes it easier to retain the key concepts that will be on the test.
- ✓ Try to show up at least 5 minutes before the test will start.
- ✓ Set your alarm and have a backup alarm set as well.
- ✓ Go to the bathroom before walking into the exam room. You don't want to waste anytime worrying about your bodily needs during the test.

## Test Taking Tips

- ✓ Bring at least two pens/pencils with good erasers, a calculator with enough batteries and any other resources that your instructor allows you to.
- ✓ Bring a watch to the test so that you can better pace yourself.
- ✓ Keep a positive attitude throughout the whole test and try to stay relaxed. If you start to feel nervous take a few deep breaths to relax.
- ✓ Keep your eyes on your own paper, you don't want to appear to be cheating and cause unnecessary trouble for yourself.
- ✓ When you first receive your test, do a quick survey of the entire test so that you know how to efficiently budget your time.
- ✓ Do the easiest problems first. Don't stay on a problem that you are stuck on, especially when time is a factor.
- ✓ Do the problems that have the greatest point values first.
- ✓ Pace yourself, don't rush . Read the entire question and pay attention to the details.
- ✓ Ask the instructor for clarification if you don't understand what they are asking for on the test.
- ✓ Write legibly. If the grader can't read what you wrote, they'll most likely mark it wrong.
- ✓ Always read the whole question carefully. Don't make assumptions about what the question might be.
- ✓ If you don't know an answer, skip it. Go on with the rest of the test and come back to it later. Other parts of the test may have some information that will help you out with that question.
- ✓ Don't worry if others finish before you. Focus on the test in front of you.
- ✓ If you have time left when you are finished, look over your test. Make sure that you have answered all the questions. Only change an answer if you misread or misinterpreted the question because the first answer that you put is usually the correct one. Watch out for careless mistakes and proofread your essay and/or short answer questions.
- ✓ Double check to make sure that you put your first and last name on the test.

## Post Test Tips

- ✓ When you get your test back look it over and make sure that there are no grading mistakes.
- ✓ Look over the test and make sure that you understand your mistakes. If you don't know the answer to a question, look it up, ask a classmate or ask the teacher.
- ✓ If the teacher reviews the test in class, be sure to take notes on what the teacher wanted for an answer on the questions/problems that you got wrong.
- ✓ If you aren't satisfied with your grade, go to your instructor and see if there's a make-up exam or any extra credit you can do.
- ✓ Save the test as study material for future cumulative tests.

## Test Taking Tips for Parents

The following tips will provide suggestions for parents on how to approach test taking with their kids.

- ✓ Make sure that your child does all their homework and reading assignments, this will help make sure your child is prepared for the test.
- ✓ Encourage your child to space out their studying and homework assignments so that they won't be forced to cram on the night before the test.
- ✓ If you are anxious about your child's test, it's ok but try to keep cool around your child, you don't want them to get anxious about their tests too.
- ✓ Encourage your child to do well but don't pressure him/her. You may stress him/her out. It is important for your child to stay relaxed for the test.
- ✓ Keep a positive attitude about tests.
- ✓ Provide a quiet, well lighted area with little distractions to help your child study efficiently.
- ✓ Mark down test days on your calendar so you and your child are both aware of testing dates.
- ✓ Make sure that your child gets enough sleep on the night before the test.
- ✓ Ensure that your child eats a healthy breakfast and avoid heavy foods that may make him/her groggy and avoid high sugar foods that may make him/her hyper.
- ✓ Make sure that your child gets up early enough so that he/she will be on time to school.
- ✓ Let your child relax for a few hours before bedtime, it can be stressful for a child to study all night.
- ✓ Talking about the test with your child can relieve stress about test taking.
- ✓ If your child is struggling on their tests, talk to them about it and meet with their teacher to find out the best way to help your child.
- ✓ Praise/reward your child when they do well on a test or for their hard work preparing for a test.
- ✓ Encourage them to do better if they don't do well.
- ✓ Review the test with your child after they have taken it and go over any mistakes they have made and make sure that they understand what they did wrong and how they can improve for the next test.