

# TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

## PREPARING FOR TESTS BEFORE YOUR FINAL REVIEW

### **1. Early in the course find out:**

- The type of exams (e.g., essays vs. multiple choice).
- The data of the exams.
- The scope of the exams (e.g., Are you responsible for dates? Formulas? Derivations?).
- Where the exam material comes from (i.e., how much from each book and how much from the lectures).

### **2. Pay special attention to:**

- Things the professor says will be on the test.
- Material that is not in the book.
- Terms, diagrams, etc., that were put on the board.

### **3. Schedule intermediate reviews:**

- Recite from your lecture notes.
- Take notes on text and recite from these notes.
- This prevents a marathon review.
- This strengthens the memory trace.

### **4. Use old tests as study aids:**

- EXAMINE OLD MIDTERMS AND FINAL EXAMS FROM PREVIOUS SEMESTERS
  1. They may be on file at the library or at the department office.
  2. Find someone who has taken the course and ask him/her about prof's style.
  3. Analyze the prof's testing style (i.e., does s/he like creativity or memorization, main points or details).
  4. Use them as practice test questions.
- USE YOUR EARLIER MIDTERMS
  1. ANALYZE YOUR MISTAKES.

- Did you misread the question?
  - Did you fail to get something important into your notes?
2. NOTE THE GRADER'S COMMENTS.
  3. ANALYZE THE PROF'S TESTING STYLE.

## FINAL REVIEW BEFORE AN EXAM

### **1. Review**

- Take notes on test material if you haven't already. (Consider flash cards.) Use your underlining as a guide and be very selective.
- Recite from your lecture notes and text notes.
- Make summary sheets of the most important material and any important unlearned material (or separate cards into piles of cards "to learn" and "learned").
- Recite from your summary sheets (or cards "to learn").
- Make "summary of summary" sheets of any material still unlearned (or continue to separate flash cards).
- Recite from these.
- 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 Deserves Favor = E G B D F -- the lines on the Treble Staff in music).

(Hormones of the anterior pituitary gland are growth hormone, ACTH, thyroid stimulating hormone, follicle stimulating hormone, leuteinizing hormone, prolactin. (G A T F L P OR G A T F U P) ACRONYM = FAT PUG (sentence = People always forget to grow up.)

### **3. Perhaps meet with other students.**

- Find one, two or three well-prepared students.

- Have an organized agenda to compare perceptions of the main points and possible essay questions.
- Don't get bogged down on minor points.
- Don't take someone else's word on a point you're not sure about--look it up later.

#### **4. Pay special attention to:**

- Material from the early part of the course.
- Confusing material.
- Concepts and principles.

#### **5. Anticipate test questions for essay tests.**

- Prepare main point outlines for anticipated questions (or even write out essays).
  1. Include a couple of specific details.
  2. Write out possible questions.
- 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) before the test.**

## IF YOU HAVE TO CRAM...

If you only have one or two days before the exam and you haven't done much of the reading: ***BE INTELLIGENT ABOUT YOUR CRAMMING.***

#### **1. How to cram for essay tests:**

- Recite from and review your lecture notes.
- Survey the readings.
  1. Read the chapter summaries carefully.
  2. Get a general idea of the main points of the reading.
  3. Don't leave out whole chapters or major sections of the reading.
  4. Take notes on the highlights of all your notes.

- Take summary notes of the highlights of all your notes. Recite from these summary notes.

## **2. How to cram for objective tests:**

- Recite from and review your lecture notes. Take summary notes and recite from them.
- Learn new terms.
- Read as much as you can.
- Pray.

## **3. Get some sleep.**

# THE DAY OF THE EXAM

## **1. Psych yourself up--be confident!**

## **2. In the morning:**

- Set an alarm with enough time to get to the exam without worrying, then set it 1/2 to 3/4 hour earlier.
- Have the proper materials:
  1. 2 pencils and 2 similar pens.
  2. Eraser.
  3. Blue Books (if necessary).
  4. Calculator (if necessary) & spare battery.
  5. Any books or notes that are allowed.
    - a. Put book marks at important pages.
    - b. Keep list on inside front cover of pages of important tables, etc.
- Glance over your notes.
- Relax on campus immediately before the test, perhaps with the newspaper and a cup of coffee.
- Avoid conversations about the subject matter--it can throw you off balance.
- Don't study the last hour before the test.
- Eat something light to give you energy and to keep your stomach from annoying you as well as others.

### **3. Get to the exam room early enough to:**

- Get a good seat.
  1. Blackboard is in view.
  2. Clock is in view.
  3. Light is okay.
  4. Distracting friends are not near you.
- Glance over your notes one last time (optional).
- Relax for a second before starting. Practice slow, deep breathing.

### **4. How to handle test anxiety.**

- It's natural--accept it.
- Some anxiety is good for motivation.
- If you have too much anxiety. Take your mind off of self-defeating thoughts. For example:
  - Before the test begins:
    1. Picture your summary notes and rehearse key concepts and terms in your mind's eye.
    2. Think briefly about the relaxed aftermath.
    3. Take several slow deep breaths and concentrate on relaxing your whole body.
  - During the test: (Think about the test items, not about how well you're doing).
  - If anxiety interferes regularly, schedule an appointment with the Counseling and Career Services office for relaxation training.

## HOW TO TAKE OBJECTIVE TESTS

### **1. Write your name.**

### **2. Survey the test.**

- Glance at all the pages.
  1. How long is it?
  2. Are you missing any pages?

3. What types of questions are there? (e.g., multiple choice, matching)

- At the top of the paper write the halfway time and the halfway question number.

### **3. Write out any memorized lists onto the exam sheet.**

### **4. Read the directions carefully.**

- Is there a penalty for guessing? (If not, answer all the questions.)
- Are all the questions weighted equally?
- For multiple choice: Is there only ONE correct choice for each question?
- For true - false: Do you have to write explanations as to why this statement is true or false?
- For short answers: Do you have to write in complete sentences?
- ASK if you find the directions unclear.

### **5. Answer easy questions first.**

- Because:
  1. You won't miss any easy questions by running out of time.
  2. It builds confidence.
  3. Later questions sometimes help answer earlier hard ones.
  4. You may spontaneously remember answers to hard questions later.
- Skip difficult questions and mark them for return with an "X" in the margin.
- Answer questions that you're somewhat sure about (but not completely sure) and mark them with a "?" in the margin.

### **6. Answering questions.**

- Cross out both negatives of a double negative.
- Underline dogmatic terms. Statements containing them are usually false because few things in the world meet the requirements of "always, never, best, etc."
- True - False. Be careful of statements with two clauses.

1. If the statement contains "and", both clauses have to be true for the statement to be true.
  2. If the statement contains "or", only one clause has to be true for the statement to be true.
- Fill-in: If you blank out, write anything.
  - Matching: Read all items before making any matches.
  - Multiple choice:
    1. Try to recall the answers before reading the choices.
    2. Each time is a number of True-False questions in one.
      - Cross out the letter of obviously false choices.
      - As you're reading the choices circle the letter of choices that seem likely to be the best.
      - Read all choices!
    3. Select the best choice. If two or more choices are correct, choose the most specific one. E.G., "A triangle has 3 sides," is better than "a triangle has more than 2 sides."
    4. Do not pay attention to how many "A's", "B's", "C's", or "D's" you have marked.
    5. Don't spend time filling in the answer sheet very neatly.

## **7. Checking your answers.**

- Use all the time allowed.
- Make sure:
  1. All questions are answered (if no penalty for guessing).
  2. All choices are clearly marked.
  3. All "X's" and "?s" on the answer sheet have been erased.
  4. Answer sheet numbers correspond to exam question numbers.
- Rework all questions if you have time.
  1. First, work on unanswered questions with "X".
  2. Second, rework questions with a "?".
  3. Third, reword the rest of the questions.