



ACE Your Exams-How to Build a Successful Plan for Conquering Final Exams

Create a Schedule for Finals

1. Prepare a general schedule. As much as possible, stick to your regular schedule.
 - Avoid late hours. Try not to stay up all night.
 - Calmly review your material and then get a good night's sleep.
 - Maintain a healthy diet and get some exercise. Refrain from excessive use of caffeine.
2. Use the hours when you are most efficient.
3. Schedule study breaks for yourself. Try not to set unrealistic goals (e.g. "I will study for two hours and take a 10 minute break" instead of "I will study for six hours and not take any breaks").
4. If possible, try not to study for two similar courses consecutively. Break up similar courses with a different course (e.g. biology, English, chemistry).
5. Try to remain detached from the "panic mania" around you. Being around nervous people will only enhance your own sense of anxiety.
6. Know when and where your exam will be given.
7. Relax for the half-hour before the test.
8. Take a break between your exams, when your schedule permits.

Deal with Tension

1. Expect a certain amount of tension. It is normal during an exam period. A small amount of anxiety helps to heighten your awareness and can enhance your performance.
2. Take time to relax. Cope with your excess tension before and between exams through rest, exercise and deep muscle relaxation. For example, long walks and bike rides are excellent ways to release nervous energy and maintain your stamina for the duration of your exam period.
3. Adopt a positive approach. To avoid becoming too anxious, look at the exam as the application step of your study efforts, instead of a threatening new experience.
4. Anxiety is contagious. Keep away from people who are highly anxious before exams, because their nervousness may tend to increase your own.
5. Plan rewards. Schedule a meal, a movie, a handball game, a visit with a friend periodically throughout finals. These help keep your spirits up.

Organizing Your Study Time

1. Write the dates and times of all of your final exams on a calendar.
2. Go thorough each course and make a "TO DO" list of study preparations.
 - a. Ask yourself:
 - ⇒ What will my final cover? (cumulative v. specific chapters)
 - ⇒ What percent of my final grade is based on the final exam?
 - ⇒ What priority is this course, relative to other courses I am taking?
 - ⇒ How am I already doing in this course?
 - ⇒ Have I finished all of the reading and/or assignments?
 - ⇒ Do I have all of my lecture notes? Are they organized?
 - b. Start breaking up material, which will be covered on the final, into smaller sections.
 - ⇒ Determine how much time it will take to review the material.



⇒ If there is too much material to cover well, try to determine what will be the most important material and concentrate on these areas.

3. Plot study periods from now until the final for each class.

- a. To prevent burnout, optimal study periods include 50-60 minutes of study time with 10-minute breaks between where you can review and self-test.
- b. Allow longer study periods for grasping larger concepts and forming relationships among facts and concepts.
- c. Pick a place to study that is comfortable and has minimal distractions
- d. Be aware of your biological clock to determine your optimal study times.

- e. Take breaks after putting in study time.
- f. Try not to disrupt your normal routines; allow time for usual activities (i.e. exercise, sleep, eating, social).

Develop a Concrete Plan for Finishing the Semester

1. Make a "To Do" list of all the things you have to do between now and the end of the semester. The list should include academic work (papers, projects, finals), persona and social obligations.
2. Assign a priority to each item according to importance. (A= Today, B= Tomorrow, C= Before the end of exams)
3. Write the date each item is due and transfer that date to your personal calendar.
4. Make a plan for accomplishing each item and set up a time schedule for accomplishing the plan.

Priority Ranking

To Do

Date Due

Additional Hints

- Prepare for exams in advance. Don't wait until it is final exam week to start "cramming" new information. Ideally, finals are a time to review previously learned material, not a time to learn new material.
- Learn how to manage your time more effectively.
- Learn how to read texts, take notes, and take tests.
- Learn how to manage your anxiety.
- Talk with your advisor to learn more about exam preparation strategies.