

Final Exam Preparations: One Month Ahead

Does it feel like final exams are a long way off but also just around the corner? Depending on how well you prepare, the next few weeks will determine your level of success and stress on these important exams.

You might be wondering where and how to begin studying. Here is a list of steps that you should begin now, one month before your first exam.

PREPARATION (3-4 weeks before exams)

1. Organization

- Gather all of your notes, homework, class work, tests, and quizzes for each of your classes
 - Put all papers in chronological order by the date they were given to you or were completed. If you get stuck, consult the class syllabus
 - Find a way to keep classes together (binder, folder, binder clip, etc.)

2. Old Tests & Quizzes

- Using your organized, chronological “stack” for each class, pull out all of the tests or quizzes you’ve gotten back
 - Again, keep each class separate from your other classes. You’ll have a pile of math tests and quizzes, a pile of English tests and quizzes, a pile of science tests and quizzes, etc.

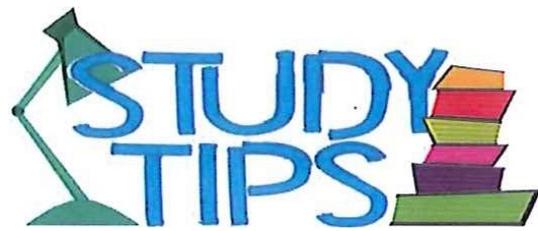
3. Study Guides, Notecards, & Vocabulary Lists

- Within each class, find your old study guides (the ones that some teachers give before a test).
 - Include any notecards or other materials you have from studying for those tests/quizzes
 - Lastly, if a teacher gave you a list of key terms or vocabulary, you’ll want to find those.

4. Schedule

- Using your agenda/planner/calendar/end of semester assessment
 - Make sure that all of your remaining deadlines, tests, and responsibilities are written down for the month.
 - Include events, due dates for papers and projects, and any remaining tests or quizzes you have for your classes. Don’t forget personal or family obligations too.
 - Schedule study time. **Yes, you should actually schedule this time in.** Putting final exam studying into your calendar will make it a priority and help you actually do it.
 - **Spread your studying out over many days.** You will remember, retain, and understand much more if you spread your studying out rather than cramming at the last minute.

Final Exam Preparations: Two-Three Weeks Ahead



STUDYING

1. Talk to Your Teachers

- a. What will be covered on the final exam?
- b. What format will it be (multiple choice, fill-in, essay, etc.) ?
- c. Any recommendations they have to help you prepare
 - i. If they give you a study guide, great. If not, make yourself a Topic List

2. Topic List

- a. Create a topic list for each class
 - i. What were the main topics covered this semester?
 - ii. You are essentially making your own study guide/a table of contents for this course. Mark off each topic as you go after you have reviewed its materials

3. Practice Tests

- a. For each topic, look at the graded test you took back then. Try taking the test again by asking yourself the questions while covering the answers. If you didn't do well when you first took the test and you don't do well again in this practice test, make a note that the topic is a priority to focus on.

4. Memorizations vs. Understanding - both are important in preparing for an exam.

- a. Memorization - being able to recall facts and all details of a chapter or topic.
 - i. The who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Ex. For math classes, it is remembering equations and what steps to take to solve a certain type of problem

✚ **Memorization takes time and practice.** The sooner you start, the better. Make mnemonics, acrostics (My Very Eager Mother Just Served Us Nachos - for the planets), acronyms (**HOMES** - for the Great Lakes), songs, rhymes, pictures, or any other technique that works for you. Practice throughout the weeks prior to the final exam.

- b. Understanding - being able to apply, critique, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize the things you've memorized. This is the part most often overlooked by students when they study.

- i. Quiz yourself. Once you've memorized the facts, ask yourself questions like these: (depending on the class)
 1. Why is ___ important?
 2. How does this compare to ___?
 3. Discuss the pros and cons of. ___
 4. What ideas validate ___ ?
 5. What are some alternatives to ___ ?
 6. How would you compare ___ to ___?
 7. What can you infer from ___ ?
 8. How would you solve ___?
 9. What facts support ___?
 10. What would the result be if ___?

Finals Preparation: Step Two

Begin with your highest priority class. Then print and complete this assessment for each final. For each final exam, make sure you are very clear on the material that is being tested. After completing an analysis of each final, highlight priority topics for each class. Priority topics are those chapters, concepts, or topics that you know the **least** about. This will help you determine the next step when allocating your time for the next few weeks. Once you've determined your topics for review, then complete a weekly time management grid (or other scheduling mechanism) to commit to an active study plan to target your knowledge deficits.

Class	Final Exam Date	Final Exam Structure (essay, multiple choice, Etc)	Final Exam Chapters/Topics (Break into topics, weeks, chapters, etc for easy organization)	What resources can I use to review this topic? Ex:book, slides, video, lecture notes, Kahn Academy, Quizlet, etc	How well do I know this material? (1=not at all; 5=very well)	What do you need to do before you can review this topic effectively?
			1			
			2			
			3			
			4			
			5			
			6			
			7			
			8			
			9			
			10			
			11			
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			13			

Final Exam Preparations: Last Week of Classes

REVIEW (During the last week before the exam)

1. **Practicing** – When you review, you are no longer learning or re-learning information. You are practicing and strengthening your memory.
 - Re-read your study guides
 - Use flashcards
 - Repeat your memory techniques
 - Meet with peers to quiz each other
 - Pose and answer sample questions
 - Isolate any remaining areas that need further study.
 - Meet with teachers to get help with those last trouble spots
2. **Handling Stress** – as the days get closer to exam day, stress and fatigue can grow. Be sure to take good care of yourself in the days leading up to exams.
 - Get enough rest (at least 6-8 hours of sleep a night – whatever you normally need)
 - Eat regularly (don't skip meals in order to study)
 - Eat healthy (don't overload on junk food or caffeine while you're studying)
 - Take breaks (exercise, spend some down time with others)
 - Visualize your success (imagine yourself writing a good essay, solving math problems, and feeling successful)
 - Practice relaxation: deep breathing while imagining your "happy place"

