10 Exam Preparation Study Tips

Preparing for exams? Exams are a necessary and stressful part of study. You need to study in ways that get the best results. Give yourself the best chance with these top ten study tips.

1. Give Yourself Enough Time to Study
Don’t leave studying until the last minute. Some students may thrive on last-minute cramming but this is not the best way to approach an exam. Ensure that you know the format, location, date, time, focus, and weighting of each test or exam to help determine your emphasis for each course. Know what percentage of the final course grade is accounted for by this exam. Set out a timetable for your studying. Write down how many exams you have and when you have to sit them. Some exams may need more study time than others. Budget your time wisely to ensure you cover all the topics covered in the exam. Organize your studying accordingly. Remember to find a balance with your studying time and your other commitments.

2. Organize Your Study Space
Choose good surroundings. Make sure you have enough space to spread out your textbooks and notes out. Do you have enough light? Is your chair comfortable? Make sure you get rid of any distractions (i.e. cell phones, computers, T.V., etc.) that may cause you to procrastinate getting started or may sabotage your time. This may necessitate leaving your house and finding an alternative study space. Some people may need complete silence while others may prefer having some background music. Some of us need things to be completely tidy and organized in order to concentrate while others thrive in a more cluttered environment. Think about what is right for you and take the time to organize your space.

3. Take Regular Breaks But Avoid Procrastination
Studies have shown that taking regular breaks really help for long-term retention of knowledge. Everyone is different, so develop a study routine that works for you. If you have trouble bringing yourself to study, chunk your work into 20-25 minute blocks, taking 5-10 minute breaks at the end of every block. You can vary this time to your comfort (i.e., 40-45 minute blocks with 15-20 minute breaks). Just keep a ratio of more work over break time. Also, take into consideration what time of day you study best. If you study best in the morning, start early and plan accordingly. If you’re more productive in the evening, get other chores done before you settle down to study. Remember to get a good night’s sleep. If you’re tired when you are studying you won’t remember much and you’ll likely see your performance drop.

4. Rewrite Your Notes to Aid Memory
Use flow charts and diagrams. Visual aids are helpful when revising course material. At the start of a topic, challenge yourself to write down everything you know about the topic. Highlight where the gaps are. Closer to your exam, condense your revision notes into one page diagrams or study sheets. By doing this, it can help you to recall information quickly during the exam.

5. Practice, Practice, Practice!
Practice old exams or use review questions from textbooks. Remember different subjects call for different studying. If it is math you’re studying for, work on problems. Don’t just read over it like you would for a history class. Practice retrieving information in a way the instructor expects (i.e. multiple choice, short answer, essay, problems, etc.) Practice recalling information without referring to your notes. Practicing also helps you to make sure you spend the right amount of time on each section. If you can’t answer a question before the exam, you won’t be able to solve it on the exam either.
Completed all necessary or central course readings and compile all of your notes from various sources (such as lecture, tutorials, texts, past assignments and tests etc.) as they are relevant to your upcoming exam. Review past assignments and tests for topics, question types, and feedback and re-read the syllabus for the course focus and description. Often past assignments highlight key course concepts and offer example questions which you can use to test yourself. With the help of the course syllabus, determine your learning objectives and the course focus.

6. Explain Your Answer to Others
Friends, roommates, parents and other family members can actually help you around exam time! Try to explain a concept or an answer to a question to them in your own words. This will help you to get it clear in your head and to highlight where you might need more work.

7. Don’t Be Afraid to Ask For Help
Organize study groups with classmates. Get together for a study session to review any questions you may need to clarify or vice versa. Make sure you stay focused and on topic for an agreed amount of time. Do not organize the study session at the last minute as this may add to some exam anxiety. Remember, if you still don’t understand something, don’t be afraid to ask your instructor. But, do not leave this to the last minute!

8. Plan Your Exam Day
Don’t leave things to the last minute before the exam to suddenly realize you don’t know where the exam room is, you don’t know the way, or what you are supposed to bring to the exam. Check all the rules and requirements and plan your route and journey time. Work out how long it will take you to get to your exam and add on extra time. Get to the exam room with time to spare. You do not want to arrive to an exam feeling frazzled from either getting lost or having to run. Be punctual. Avoid any last-minute conversations with classmates about exam material as this may add to any exam anxiety. Give yourself at least 5 to 10 minutes to gather your thoughts and relax before starting the exam. Also, when you enter the exam room, find a comfortable spot to sit in and organize your materials while collecting your thoughts.

9. Healthy Food, Healthy Brain
Keep away from junk-food. Keep your body and brain well fuelled by choosing nutritious foods. You may feel like you deserve a treat or that you don’t have time to cook, but what you eat can impact your concentration and energy level. This also applies on exam day(s). Some food may seem appealing, but they won’t help when your energy levels crash an hour or so later (i.e. sugar, caffeine). Some foods that have been proven to aid concentration and memory are fish, nuts, seeds, yogurt and blueberries.

10. Drink Plenty of Water
Remember that being hydrated is essential for your brain to work at its best. Make sure you keep drinking plenty of water throughout your revision/studying, and also on exam day. Good luck!

References:

http://rdc.libguides.com/learningskills