

Preparing for College Exams



A major contributor to success in college is the ability to study effectively for exams.

Tips for Studying:

Choose your environment wisely. Our brains associate our homes/rooms with relaxation. Study in a place you associate with learning and your brain is more likely to focus on studying. Popular places for studying include the Union, ACE, and the Library.

Plan your study time. Using a 5-Day Study Plan, split up your studying over the course of a week rather than just studying the night before an exam. Know what you will study, when, where, and how. Review what you've learned in class each day to help retain information and not be overwhelmed.

Know the makeup of the exam. Will the exam be multiple choice, short answer, true/false, or essay? Is it online and open-notes or in-class and timed? Different types of tests require different types of preparation.

Use active forms of studying. Passive studying looks like reading notes and/or the textbook, rewriting notes, and rote memorization (using repetition to recall information). Active studying looks like summarizing materials into your own words, using meaningful learning to ensure long-term memory, reorganizing information, relating old information to new, and using self-testing.

During the Exam:

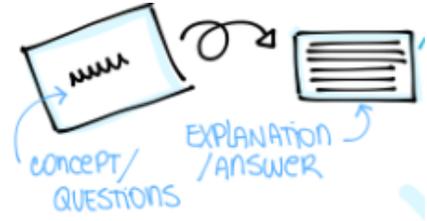
- ✓ Preview the test.
- ✓ Read all directions carefully.
- ✓ Do what you know first—don't waste time on questions you don't know.
- ✓ Pace yourself—Be aware of how much time is left.
- ✓ Use the test to take the test: other questions or answers may provide clues to a question you don't know.
- ✓ Trust your first instinct, it is usually right.

Methods of Studying

Did you know: Research doesn't support "learning styles," but instead shows that we take in information best when we get it in various forms. Using multiple methods to studies is more helpful than just one.

Flashcards:

- Read the concept or question and then try to explain or answer it. Divide your flashcards into two groups: the ones you don't know, the one's you do know. Study the ones you don't know until they become ones you do.



Create Your Own Study Guide:

- Decide what information is likely to be on the exam and create a study guide for yourself. What are the important terms and concepts from each chapter?

Write:

- Write down definitions, summarize content in your own words, and create your own test questions. Remember, rewriting notes without changing anything is a passive way of studying: it is more effective to rewrite information in different ways.

Do the Practice Problems:

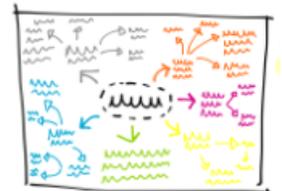
- Do every exercise you have: check the text book, past quizzes, practice exams, etc. Applying the concepts to questions is one of the most efficient ways to study.

Recreate Diagrams:

- Create diagrams of the processes you need to learn or recreate diagrams found in your textbook. Draw processes in ways that make sense to you rather than simply looking at them in your notes.

Create Mind Maps:

- Start with a title in the middle of a blank page and add subtitles/ related information around it. Connect ideas, people, themes, and more.



Blank Page:

- Put aside your notes and take out a blank sheet of paper. Write down absolutely everything you know about a topic. After, use your notes to fill in the blanks—what did you miss? Focus your studying on what you didn't know.



Teach:

- Pretend like you are the instructor and teach your notes (to yourself, your pet, a friend, or an object). Use a piece of paper or whiteboard to illustrate concepts. Practice until you can teach the information from memory.

5 Day Study Plan

Class: _____ **Exam Date:** _____ **Exam Format:** _____

Material Covered: _____ **Exam Weight:** _____

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Studying Goal:				
Method I will use to study:				
When and where I will study:				
Materials I need to study:				

A recent study found that most NDSU students start studying at least three days before an exam. Using this tool can help you follow in their footsteps! Remember: Be as specific as possible: the more detailed you are, the likelier you are to succeed!