

Learning Skills Services Student Development Centre

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Preparing for Tests and Exams

Your best preparation for tests and exams is what you do day-by-day. Make the following suggestions part of your routine:

Prepare for Class:

- Read the recommended text pages. Some students like to do a fairly quick reading before class and then after class do a more thorough reading; other students will read and make notes or highlight key information before they go to class. Think about which option would work best in each course.
- Look through your course outline before class to set up expectations of what you'll learn in class and to help you identify the main topic.
- Read over your notes from the last class; this will help you see the connection between lectures

Attend ALL Classes:

- Nothing works better than attending class, listening intently, and taking your own notes! Going to class is an efficient way to learn course content.

Make Good Use of Course Resources:

- If available, check out the course website. In addition to information about the course, the professor may have included sample test questions, old tests, and links to a website for your textbook.
- Make good use of any help centres that are set up for your courses and attend any review sessions.
- Talk to your professor or teaching assistant about any questions or problems you have as these arise.

Use a System for Summarizing Text Materials:

- Identifying main ideas is a key step in developing good comprehension and memory of the information. Common ways to emphasize main ideas include:
 1. making a separate set of study notes
 2. adding your own marginal notes to the text
 3. underlining or highlighting in the text itself
- Experiment to see which method works best for you. Remember, your end goal is for you to KNOW the information, not just to produce a nice set of notes.



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Work Regularly on Course Material:

- Working regularly on a course is much more effective than trying to get through everything just before a test.
- Read your text each week.
- Also, after every class, read over your class notes before you put them away. This is an important step in learning the material and identifying areas for further clarification.

Organize your Notes and Other Learning Materials:

- Set up a binder for each course that you are taking.
- Every day, organize class notes, text summary notes, and any other materials that your course generates.

Don't Cram for Tests - Give Yourself Enough Review Time:

- Aim to finish a comprehensive review by the day before your test.
- University courses usually cover a lot of information on tests and exams, so plan your schedule to get everything done.
- Use time on that last day to look through things one last time in a more relaxed and confident frame of mind.

Manage Your Energy and Concentration Levels:

- Ensure that you get enough sleep, good nutrition, and exercise.
- If you take a motivated, clear, bright mind into class, while working on coursework, and into your exams, you can optimize your performance.

Carry a Reasonable Courseload:

- Take the quantity and type of courses that are right for you. Be aware of the mandatory requirements for your program and, within those constraints, determine your courseload.
- If your life is busy with essential non-school activities, such as a paying job or family responsibilities, if possible it might be in your best interest to take a reduced academic load.