

# **Preparing for Your Exam**

**How to Get Started**

# Assessment (Exams/Tests) Preparation Tips

Assessments are a necessary part of your academic journey as they are often used to prove how much you've learned. If you are someone who tends to stress out about exams/tests and frantically cram the night before, you're not alone



There are better ways to prepare for an exam/test. Below are some tips on how to study for your next exam/test. These tips range from scheduling regular study sessions to taking care of yourself the night before and day of the exam/test and everything in between.

# Your studying should begin several weeks before the exam.

Check the exam date and schedule your study sessions backwards in time. Plan on having 2-3 study sessions each week for at least a couple of weeks before the exam, if your schedule allows it. If your exams are too close together, shorten the period of time before the exam.

For example, if you have a test on April 30, you might plan study sessions on the 29th, 28th, 25th, 22nd, 18th, and 15th. Notice that the dates are going backward from the exam date, so your first study session is on the 15th, 2 weeks before the exam.

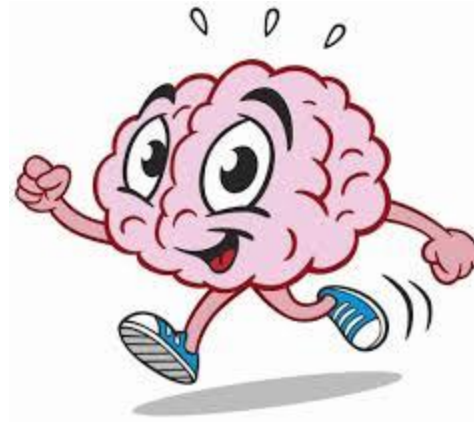


# To better retain information, we recommend studying in short bursts.

Stick with 20-30 minutes for each session. If you try to sit and study for several hours right before a test, your brain won't retain as much of the information.

Instead, schedule sessions 20-30 minutes long for several weeks before the exam.

If you need to have a couple of study sessions in a row, plan a break of at least 10 minutes in between as this allows your brain time to rest and process the information you've just studied.



# Develop S.M.A.R.T. goals for each review session.



List areas you want to cover along with performance goals. Having a specific goal for each study session keeps you focused. If you already know what you're going to do before you even sit down to study, you won't have to waste precious study time figuring out where to start or what to cover.

For example, if you planned 6 study sessions, you might take a practice test the first session, then spend the next 2 sessions on the material you had problems with in the practice test. Then, you could take another practice test and reassess your knowledge to plan the rest of your sessions.

# Prepare a quiet, clean space to study in.

Set up a spot to study that's well-lit and has minimal distractions. Choose a place where you can concentrate the best. Keep all your study materials and supplies you'll need (such as paper, index cards, and pens) handy. Create an environment that allows your brain to instantly go into "study mode" as soon as you sit down. If there's not a good place to study at home, you might study in the library or designated spots on campus (e.g. Davis Center) instead.

Take regular study breaks during each session and do something relaxing. This allows your brain to take a rest.



# Go for a walk.

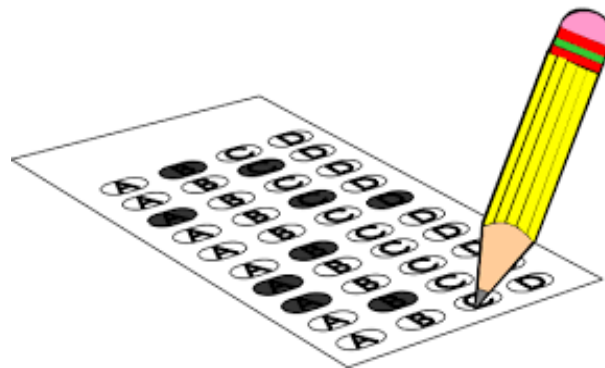
Studies have shown that engaging in 20 minutes of cardio exercise improves your memory. Listening to a podcast or recorded lecture of the material during your cardio exercise is a great way to reinforce the material.



# Practice makes perfect...or at least it helps you assess your knowledge gaps.

Review your graded assessments so you can identify your strengths and areas that need improvement. Reviewing practice problems from your textbook/course materials or retaking a prior test before you begin studying can help you understand where to focus your attention/efforts.

When possible, mimic simulated test conditions. For example, if you have one hour to complete the exam, set a timer for your practice exam for one hour.





# Use flashcards for quick review.



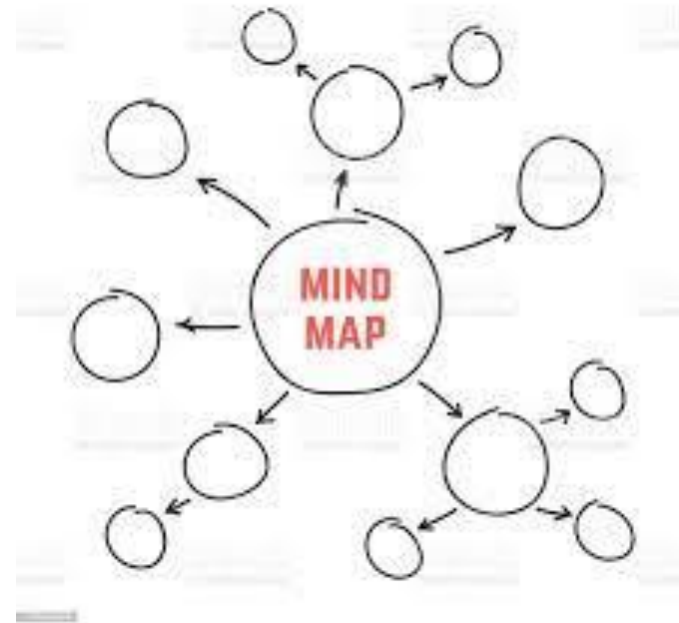
Take flashcards wherever you go to maximize your study time. Flashcards work best for short things you have to memorize such as: formulas, specific dates, vocabulary words or definitions. Keep the flashcards with you so you can take them out and review them when you have a few minutes. This allows you some additional study time in addition to your planned sessions.

You can also give your flashcards to someone so they can quiz you.

# Create a mind map if you're a visual learner.

Mind maps show connections between concepts you're studying. Start with a central idea or principle and write it in the middle of a piece of paper. Draw a circle around it, then draw lines from the circle that you'll connect to other ideas or principles. Work outward, connecting all the different things you'll be tested on.

You might also look into computer apps that help you construct mind maps and other study tools. Many are available for free online.



# Read your notes out loud.



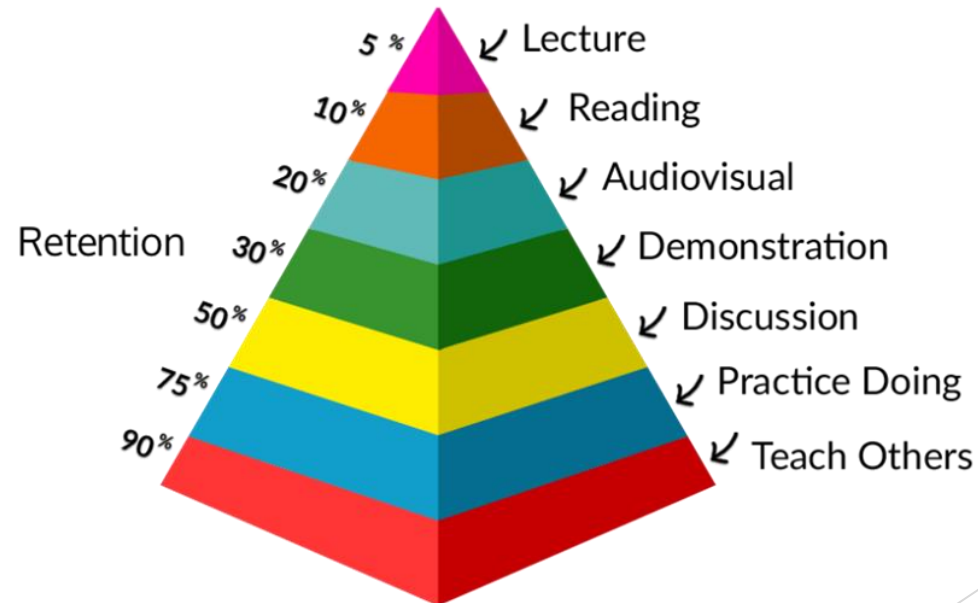
Reading out loud engages more of your senses. Reading silently is a passive activity and for most people, this isn't the best way to learn and retain information.

Reading aloud, on the other hand, is **active** and forces you to concentrate on every word. If you find that you stumble over something when you read aloud, it could be you aren't as familiar with that concept yet. Go over it again until you understand it.

# Teach the subject to someone else.

Talk to a peer, study skills tutor or T.A. about what you've learned. Teaching something to someone else requires a firm grasp of the material. This ensures you are prepared to address any questions that might arise. You might even find that they ask you about something you haven't considered before.

Putting terminology into your own words like this can help you uncover things you might not completely understand about the material.



# Make up your own test questions.



Creating your own test questions helps you think critically. Think about the most important points first—the things you're guaranteed to be tested on. Try to come up with the trickiest questions you can to challenge your knowledge of the concepts you're studying.

- Use your prior exams to get an idea of the types of questions your professor may ask. This will make it easier to develop your own questions.

For courses whose readings are based on articles, summarize the main ideas/arguments of each article.

# Get a study group together.



**Studying with classmates can help you retain the material better.** If you know other students preparing for the same test, get together to quiz each other and discuss any confusion you might have. Working through problematic areas together will help you all get a stronger grasp on the material.

Your Nagivate App has a feature already designed for this called “Study Buddies”. Use this feature to identify other students who are looking to form a study group.

# Attend review sessions offered by your Professor or TA

Review sessions give you a better idea of what will be on the test. Questions from other students might also help highlight areas you don't understand as well as you should. Sometimes other students can bring up things you never thought about. Most teachers offer review sessions within a week of the test or after all the material to be tested has been covered in class. Sometimes these are regular class sessions, but they might also be offered at a different time.

Some courses utilize **Supplemental Instruction (SI)**. The SI Leaders provide 2 weekly review sessions and up to 2 office hours a week. These review sessions and office hours are a great opportunity for you to receive some additional support prior to an exam. You can also schedule an appointment with a Subject Area Tutor in advance of your exam to address specific questions or challenge areas.

