

Specific Study Plan (SSP)

How to Begin: Think about how much time you will spend studying and what you will do during those study sessions. Be specific!

- Plan what times you will study
- Plan breaks into study time
- Plan the topics you'll cover in each session
- Plan the strategies you'll use to study
- Use Time Management Schedule
- Be sure to reflect on how the session went in order to adjust subsequent sessions!

Construct your study plan a week before the exam. Think about your goals by asking yourself these 6 questions:

1. ***What grade do I want to earn on the exam?*** (Note: don't automatically say an "A" in response to this question. Instead, think about how much time and effort you are willing to invest to earn the grade you desire.)
2. ***How much time do I need to invest in order to earn this grade?***
3. ***Where will I find the extra time?*** Will I have to give up other activities in order to carve out time to study?
4. ***What kind of exam is it?*** Multiple choice? Essay? What kinds of problems do I usually have when I take tests of this nature?
5. ***Do I know the balance of items?*** Is it a memorization task or will I be expected to answer higher-level questions? What proportion of questions will come from the text or lectures?
6. ***What kinds of rehearsal strategies will I need to create because they work best for this exam?***

Specific Study Plan Tips:

- **Begin each session with a review of what you learned previously;** it may be best to say out loud the things you covered in earlier sessions. If you find there is material that is still giving you problems, begin the current study session with it.
- **End each session with a review of only those concepts you concentrated on in the current session.** This type of review serves as a monitoring device to let you know what you actually remember from the session and whether you will need to devote more time to a particular section. If you start this review and find that you are having problems, you can return to those concepts immediately and rehearse some more.
- In the day or two before the test, **concentrate on the material you understand least.** Many students make the mistake of spending equal amounts of time on everything before an exam, even information they know fairly well. Learn from their mistakes. The closer the exam, the more you want to concentrate on concepts you don't know well.
- **Set goals for yourself and make a Specific Study Plan for each exam** so that you can stay on track with both rehearsing and reviewing. Note that it is important to focus on learning specific concepts, not on the amount of time you actually have allotted for studying. It is usually ineffective to look over all the information in every study session.

Before the Test: Study Strategies

General Tips:

- **Start early.** Make sure all assigned readings are finished several days before the test.
- **Get Organized.** Your study tools and strategies, such as notes, PPTs, and handouts, so you can dig right in.
- **Study in Order.** Study the subjects you're least motivated to learn first.
- **Plan Breaks.** Take breaks often so you don't become overwhelmed with a long study session.
- **Reward Yourself.** Plan something rewarding for yourself upon completion of studying.
- **Stay healthy.** Eat properly and get enough sleep. Avoid late night cramming. Also, monitor your stress levels!
- **Self test.** Ask yourself questions about the material, answer out loud, then check to see if you're correct.
- **Study with a classmate.** One of the most successful ways to do this is for both students to study on their own, then come together to test each other and discuss concepts they're not sure of.

Reviewing Process

1. **Organize.** Before you begin rehearsing and reviewing, make sure your study materials are organized in a way that is useful for you.
2. **Use Images and Other Mnemonics.** Use little tricks to remember concepts, for instance learning a list by taking the first letter of each item you are trying to memorize and making them spell something.
3. **Say It Rather Than Reread It.** Rereading is time consuming, allows you to pick up very little additional information, and may make you dependant on the specific wording of the text. When you say information out loud, you tend to summarize it in your own words.
4. **Have Several Review Sessions.** Five hours of studying spread over four days has proven more effective than five hours spent cramming the day of the test. It will also increase your focus and decrease your loathing while studying.

Study Tools

Flashcards- Use index cards to write words, people, and/or concepts on one side and an explanation on the other

Concept Maps- Write concepts in boxes and draw lines to connect and show relationships with other concepts

Outlines- Condense notes and chapter information into a concise outline

Rewrite notes- Rewrite your class notes with only the most relevant information to your upcoming test

Highlight notes- Highlight the most important concepts in your notes or the concepts you understand least

Make Lists- List people, places, or things relevant to the upcoming test and write an explanation/definition for each

Reread chapters- Go back over the headings, summary, and other important topics in the chapters for your test

Act out concepts or people- Come up with relevant scenarios or hand gestures to help you remember important information

Study Environment

Choosing an Ideal Study Space

- Know the level of **noise** that is optimal for your own studying. Some people need to have **complete quiet** to study, whereas others prefer "**white noise**" in the background.
- The less distractions you have the better. **TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE and TV!**
- Pick a place where the **ONLY** thing you do there is study.
- Make sure there is **adequate lighting**, ventilation, a comfortable (but not too comfortable!) seat, and enough space to spread out your study materials.
- Keep in mind that the **absolute worst** place you can study is **your bed!** You'll confuse studying with sleep and sleep with studying, resulting in naps when you should be reading and insomnia when you should be sleeping.
- Pick a place **secluded** enough so **people** and/or friends **will not disrupt** your studying

Once you're there: Test Taking Strategies

General Strategies

- ❖ When you get the test, look to see what each section is worth. Be sure to dedicate enough time to complete the section with the highest point value.
- ❖ When you get the test, review each section and plan how you will complete the entire test. Be sure to manage your time accordingly and pace yourself so you do not leave anything blank.
- ❖ Stay calm. If you get frustrated with a question or a section, move on and come back to it once you feel calmer.
- ❖ If you studied enough, you probably know more than you think. Give yourself time to come up with the correct answer.
- ❖ Think positively. Be confident in what you know.
- ❖ If you are scared you'll forget something, make a note of the concept, idea, person, etc. on the test as soon as you receive it if your professor allows it. This will allow you to focus your energy on other concepts on the test.

Multiple Choice Tests

- When you get the exam, take a minute or two to look through it. Read the directions and see how many items there are so that you know how to divide up your time.
- Read all answer choices before making a decision in case one answer is more correct than another
- If you're not sure of the answer, skip it. Just be sure to come back to it and mark other answers in the correct place.
- Eliminate answers whenever possible.
- Beware of All-or-Nothing words: all, always, none, never, nothing, every, exactly, invariably. These are strong words that allow no exceptions.
- Use information from other items on the exam to help you with items you don't know.
- Use all of the allotted time. ALWAYS look over your test at least once before turning it in, to make sure you answered all the questions and avoided careless mistakes.
- When faced with a situation where you have to guess, make a selection and move on. Go with your gut instinct, and only return to the question if you find information later in the test which reminds you of the correct answer.
- NEVER leave items blank if you don't know the answer, unless you are penalized for guessing.

True/False Tests

- Every part of a sentence must be true. Even if only one part of the sentence is false, the entire statement is false.
- Be aware of absolutes, such as always, never, not, nothing, everything, etc. These words can trick you because they imply the statement must always be true. They usually indicate "false" answers.
- Qualifying words, such as sometimes, often, frequently, generally, etc. can present the possibility of an accurate statement. They usually indicate "true" answers.

Once you're there: Test Taking Strategies (cont.)

Essay Tests

Allotted time. Think carefully when you receive the test about how long you will spend on the essay or short answer items. Make sure to factor in objective questions if those are also on the test.

Structuring your essay. Your professor probably won't tell you exactly how to structure your essay, but if he/she does, follow their structure! Make sure you have an introductory paragraph that outlines your thesis and give enough supporting points with specific examples to answer the question. Make sure you save time for a conclusion that relates and summarizes your main points!

Evaluation guidelines. Make sure you know what your professor expects from the essay. For instance, do they want the information repeated exactly as it appeared in the text or lecture, or do you get points for original thought? What are their standards for grammar, spelling, and neatness? If the professor doesn't say anything about their expectations, you should ask.

Yes, you CAN study for an essay exam! Use the PORPE method!

Predict: Predict the question(s) that you think might be asked on the exam. Sometimes professors will give you hints, or even examples of questions that may be asked.

Organize: Use an outline to organize the key points you would make to answer the proposed question.

Rehearse: Commit the items in your outline to memory. If you are unsure of a concept, return to it later.

Practice: Write out the answers to some of your questions the way you would respond to them on the test.

Evaluate: Check what you have written against your outlines and other study material. Make sure you have adequate introduction, examples, supporting information, and conclusion.

Open Book Tests

BE ORGANIZED! The key to success in an open book test is to know where to find the answers. If your materials are scattered, so will you be during the test.

Make Notes. Write down important concepts and where to find them in the book.

Highlight important terms. Use a highlighter to make it easier to find key terms when flipping through the book.

Post-It notes. Use Post-It notes to identify key places/pages in the book for easy reference. Be sure to write a word or phrase which will remind you what is on that page.

Time Management. Watch the clock to make sure you have enough time to complete the test. Monitor how much time you spend on each question, so you do not fall behind.

Practice. Anticipate question topics and practice trying to find the topic in your book.