

Survival Guide to Finals Week

Day 1 of 5: Time Management



Time management is one of the most important skills you can learn as a college student. If you manage your time wisely throughout finals week, you will find studying for tests much easier because you will already be partly prepared.

What to do:

- Make a list of all tests and/or essays you have and their assigned test dates/due dates
- Prepare a study schedule; creating a plan will better manage your time and prevent you from becoming overwhelmed
- Develop good time management skills

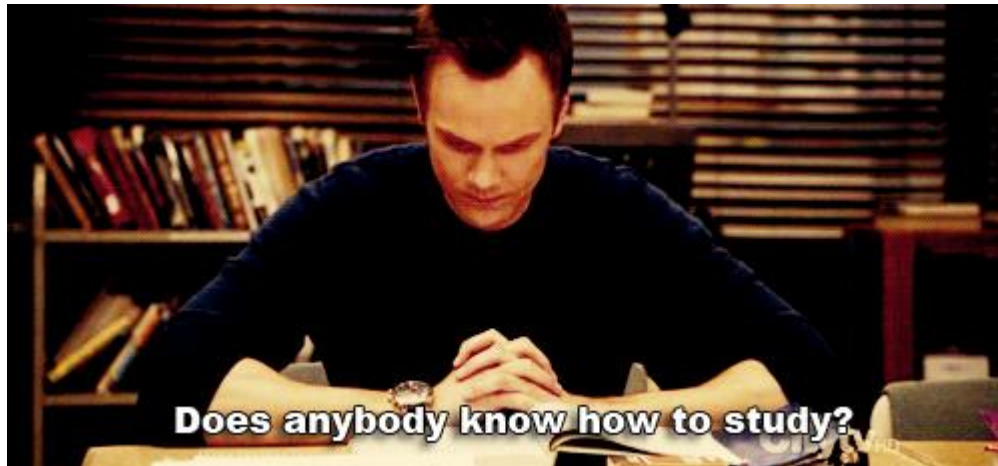
Day 2 of 5: Assess the Test



Find out what kind of test it will be and what will be covered:

- What kind of a test will it be?
 - Multiple choice? Essay? True or false? A combination? If possible, look at previous tests from this class. Ask students who took the course before what the tests are generally like
- Figure out what will be on the test
 - Listen to what the professor says will be on the test and WRITE IT DOWN. Always ASK what will be covered
- Quick suggestions for what could be on your test:
 - Anything that was in a handout or written on the board
 - Anything the professor stressed or repeated during lectures
 - Any questions the professor asked during class discussion
 - Pay particular attention to things the professor says in the class or two just prior to the test
- Tips to trade
 - Ask if the professor likes every little detail in your answer, or if he's a "broad picture," "understand the concept," "sweep of the brush" kind of a guy
 - Ask if the professor counts off for grammar or spelling
 - Someone who took the class before is often your best source of information on what the test will cover, what you need to study, and how best to answer the questions
 - It's also good to **know how the test will be graded, and how much it counts towards your final grade**

Day 3 of 5: The Art of Studying



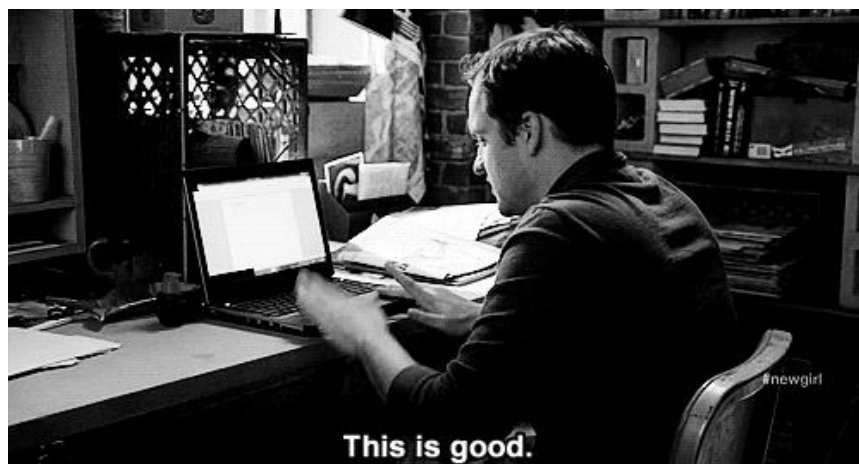
1. Find a quiet place, free of distractions
 - Tell your friends you'll be unreachable
 - Turn off your cell phone
 - Promise yourself NO social media
2. Gather all of your materials before you start
 - Pens, paper, laptop, calculator, note cards
 - Textbook, class notes, handouts
 - Water and something healthy to munch on
3. Set goals
 - It is much better to study for a test in several short bursts with a wrap-up session the evening before or the day of the exam.
 - If, for example, you are being tested on three chapters, set up four two-hour study sessions – one for each chapter and one for final review.
4. 1 & 10 Rule: 1 hour study sessions & 10 minute breaks
 - Study for half an hour, or an hour at most, and then take a five- or 10-minute break to refresh your mind (and possibly, your attitude!)
5. There are many different ways to study, and you will quickly find out what works best for you. Here are some suggestions –

Ways to Study



The Reading Method: reading out loud makes your brain focus more clearly on the words and you are less likely to find yourself drifting away.

- Read and re-read and read your textbook again, class notes and handouts one more time after that
- Read everything you highlighted OUT LOUD if you are in a place where you won't disturb anybody else
- Repeat important phrases to get them stuck in your mind. Make sure, though, that you *understand* what you are reading
- Finally, if there are questions at the end of each chapter, answer them. (Again – hopefully you already did this.)



The Writing Method: writing is *active* learning and you are more likely to remember things if you write them down.

- Rewrite the important things in your own words; elaborate if you can



Flash Cards: making flash cards is a great combination method, and it's especially good if you need to learn dates, vocabulary/definitions, short facts or formulae.

- On one side of the card you write down the word or the date or the name of the formula, and on the other side you write the answer
- Then test yourself or have someone test you
- Flash cards can be your best friend before an exam – write them up early and keep them in your backpack, and then every 10-minute break can be a study session



Mnemonics: a device such as a pattern of letters, ideas, or associations that assists in remembering something.

- Mnemonics are an excellent memory tool if you need to know a set of information
- Remember the Order of Operations in Algebra? Me neither, but I do remember the mnemonic that helps me recall it: P.E.M.D.A.S (Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally) which represents Parenthesis, Exponents, Multiplication, Division, Addition and Subtraction
- You can create a mnemonic that will help you remember and recall information that may stay with you for years!

Day 4 of 5: Self Care



Dealing With Stress:

- **If you feel your anxiety level rising, tell yourself to STOP before it gets out of control**
 - Take deep breaths and tell yourself it will be okay
 - Make a mantra – whatever works for you; “This too shall pass,” “The end is in sight,” “I’m going to be a teacher...” – and repeat it slowly in your head or out loud if you can
- **Daydream**
 - Give yourself a five-minute vacation to think about other things
 - Hum your favorite song, remember your last great vacation or dream about your next, smile about something your child did or imagine petting your dog
- **Focus**
 - After you’ve taken a few minutes out to daydream, FOCUS
 - Think about the little picture – getting through one chapter, memorizing 20 vocabulary words, passing the next quiz – and make it your goal to succeed at that one thing

Dealing with physical tension –

- **Try “focal breathing”**
 - Exhale while slowly counting to 10. Feel that your lungs are completely empty
 - Breathe in through your nose, slowly counting to 10; keep your shoulders down and focus on pushing the air towards your stomach; you should feel your lower body expand and, at the end of the breath, some pressure on your lower back
 - Exhale slowly through your mouth, with your lips in an “ooh” position, pretend you’re trying to blow out a candle
- **Do a body check**
 - Sitting comfortably, start with your feet and move up your body checking for tension in each body part and actively relaxing each one in turn
- **Tense and relax**
 - Like the body check, start with your feet but actively clench each muscle group for three seconds before releasing it and relaxing it completely

Day 5 of 5: Finish Strong



Eat Well

- Don't over-caffeinate
- Choose healthy snacks like whole fruits, nuts or pretzels over sugary/salty vending machine food; healthy fats improve your retention and provide more energy over long study sessions
- Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! Sodas or sugary drinks create temporary sugar highs but end in headaches that will affect your studying

Take Breaks:

- Don't cram before the exam
- Get a good night sleep before your test
- Stop studying an hour before the test
- Enough sleep and a free mind will allow you to focus
- Think positive thoughts!
 - Imagine success rather than dread failure
 - Praise your own efforts, and remind yourself that you are doing your very best, then, do your very best