

# TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

## PREPARING FOR TEST BEFORE YOUR FINAL REVIEW

### 1. Early in the course find out:

- a. The type of exams (e.g., essays vs. multiple choice)
- b. The date of the exams
- c. The scope of the exams (e.g., Are you responsible for dates? Formulas? Derivations?)
- d. Where the exam material comes from (i.e., how much from each book and how much from the lectures)

### 2. Pay special attention to:

- a. Things the professor says will be on the test
- b. Material that is not in the book
- c. Terms, diagrams, etc., that were put on the board

### 3. Schedule intermediate reviews:

- a. Recite from your lecture notes
- b. Take notes on text and recite from these notes
- c. This prevents a marathon review
- d. This strengthens the memory trace

### 4. Use old tests as study aids:

- a. Examine old midterms and final exams from previous semesters (they may be on file at the library or at the department office)
- b. Find someone who has taken the course and ask him/her about professor's style
- c. Analyze the professor's testing style (i.e., does s/he like creativity or memorization, main points or details)
- d. Use old exams as practice test questions

### 5. Use earlier midterms

- a. Analyze your mistakes
  - Did you misread the question?
  - Did you fail to get something important into your notes?
- b. Note the grader's comments
- c. Analyze the professor's testing style

## **FINAL REVIEW BEFORE AN EXAM**

### **1. Review**

- a. Take notes on test material if you haven't already. (Consider flash cards.) Use your underlining as a guide and be very selective.
- b. Recite from your lecture notes and text notes
- c. Make summary sheets of the most important material and any important unlearned material (or separate cards into piles of cards "to learn" and "learned")
- d. Recite from your summary sheets (or cards "to learn")
- e. Make "summary of summary" sheets of any material still unlearned (or continue to separate flash cards)
- f. Recite from these
- g. Make "summary of summary of summary" sheets (or separate flash cards further)

### **2. Memorize lists**

To memorize lists on your summary sheets, use mnemonic acronyms (e.g. VISTA—Volunteers in Service to America), and mnemonic sentences (Every Good Boy Does Fine—E G B D F, the lines on the Treble Staff in music)

### **3. Perhaps meet with other students**

- a. Find one, two or three well-prepared students
- b. Have an organized agenda to compare perceptions of the main points and possible essay questions
- c. Don't get bogged down on minor points
- d. Don't take someone else's word on a point you're not sure about--look it up later

### **4. Pay special attention to:**

- a. Material from the early part of the course
- b. Confusing material
- c. Concepts and principles

### **5. Anticipate test questions for essay tests**

- a. Prepare main point outlines for anticipated questions (or even write out essays)
  - i. Include a couple of specific details
  - ii. Write out possible questions
- b. Don't expect to be able to anticipate all the questions

### **6. Get a decent amount of sleep**

### **7. Eat something (fruit, cereal, sandwich, granola bar)**

## **IF YOU HAVE TO CRAM**

### **1. For an essay test**

- a. Recite from and review your lecture notes.
- b. Survey the readings
  - i. Read the chapter summaries carefully
  - ii. Get a general idea of the main points of the reading
  - iii. Don't leave out whole chapters or major sections of the reading
  - iv. Take notes on the highlights of all your notes
- c. Take summary notes of the highlights of all your notes. Recite from these summary notes.

### **2. For an objective test**

- a. Recite from and review your lecture notes. Take summary notes and recite from them
- b. Learn new terms
- c. Read as much as you can

### **3. Get some sleep**

## **THE DAY OF THE EXAM**

### **1. Psyche yourself up—be confident!**

### **2. In the morning:**

- a. Set an alarm clock with enough time to get to the exam without worrying
- b. Have the proper materials:
  - i. 2 pencils and 2 similar pens
  - ii. Eraser
  - iii. Any books or notes that are allowed
    1. Put bookmarks at important pages
    2. Keep list on inside cover of pages with important tables, etc.
  - iv. Glance over your notes
  - v. Relax on campus immediately before the test
  - vi. Avoid conversations about the subject matter
  - vii. Don't study the last hour before the test
  - viii. Eat something light

### **3. Get to the exam room early enough to:**

- a. Get a good seat
- b. Glance over your notes a final time

## **HOW TO TAKE OBJECTIVE TESTS**

### **1. Survey the test**

- a. How long is it?
- b. Are you missing any pages?
- c. What types of questions are there?
- d. Survey the readings

### **2. Write the halfway time and halfway question number**

### **3. Write out any memorized lists**

### **4. Read the directions carefully**

- a. Is there a penalty for guessing? (If not, answer all questions.)
- b. Are all the questions weighted equally?
- c. For multiple choice, is there only one correct answer?

### **5. Answer easy questions first**

### **6. When answering questions:**

- a. Underline dogmatic terms. These statements are usually false because few things in the world meet the requirement of always, never, best, worst...
- b. True / False – Be careful of statements with two clauses.
  - i. If statement contains “and” both clauses must be true for the statement to be true
  - ii. If statement contains “or” only one clause must be true for the statement to be true
- c. Fill-in – if you blank out, write in anything
- d. Matching – read all items before making matches
- e. Multiple Choice –
  - i. Try to recall the answers before reading the choices
  - ii. Select the best choice

### **7. Check your answers**

- a. Use all the time allowed
- b. Rework questions if you have time
  - i. First, work on any unanswered questions
  - ii. Then, rework questions you’re unsure of
  - iii. Finally, rework the rest of the questions