

Tips for Exams

Once you are to the point where you understand the material, you are ready to start working on remembering. The best way to study for an exam is to practice in the way you will be tested. Below are some specific suggestions for different types of exams.

Concept-Based Exams

- Make concept maps using a white board or just write on a piece of paper.
- Make graphs or charts – one with answers (the answer key) and one without answers. Then, fill in the missing information on the blank forms before checking the answer key.
- Use flash cards or a flash card app like Anki or Quizlet to quiz yourself.
- Ask and answer questions about the material. Say your answers out loud or write them down on a piece of paper or white board.
- Ask and answer questions about the material with peers in the class or a friend or family member. They don't need to know the answers – you will. Saying answers out loud is an incredibly effective way to study.
- Take practice exams. If you can't get your hands on any, make up some exam questions yourself!

Multiple-Choice Exams

- Flash cards/flash card apps are great for multiple choice exams.
- Always take any practice exams available.
- Answers that include words like "always," "never," "every," or "none" can usually be eliminated.
- Read the question and try to answer it before looking at the choices.
- Read all the choices before picking one.
- If one of the choices is partially wrong, it's wrong and you shouldn't choose it.

Problem-Based Exams

- Do as many practice problems as you can.
- Mix up the practice problems so you learn to identify what the problem is about (i.e., don't go chapter by chapter or topic by topic).
- Get your hands on practice exams and do them.
- For any problem you solve, do not look at the answer until you are done solving the problem and have convinced yourself that you solved it as best as you can. Only then should you look at the answer.
- While answer keys are useful, make sure you don't depend on them. Even after looking at the answer and finding out you did it correctly, make sure you understand **why** your answer is correct.
- If you get a problem wrong, ask yourself why. Was it a careless mistake? Was there something you didn't know? Did you apply information incorrectly? Diagnosing why you got a problem wrong is part of the learning process.
- Good questions to ask yourself as you are practicing for the exam include: *What is given here? What is known? Have I seen a problem like this before and if so, what is the big picture topic? How should I proceed? Does what I'm doing make sense? How do I know it makes sense? Once you have an answer ask yourself does this answer makes sense? Why or why not?*

If you need help with any of the above – previewing, taking notes in class, reading, retrieval practice – make an appointment with one of our Academic Success Coaches. We are here to help you!