

TWU Counseling Center

Preparing for Examinations

Preparing adequately for exams is a process, not a one-time, one-day event. Learning to use your study time wisely as you prepare for an exam will help you perform better.

Prepare systematically for your examinations

1. Begin the day after a test to prepare for the next test. Set aside one hour each week to review of each subject to incorporate all you have studied before and the new material for that week. Understand that repetition aids in recall.
2. Arrange a schedule for review of materials before an exam. Do not plan the review only for the day before or the day of the exam.
3. Review by making a list of important topics. Under each topic, place items important to that topic.
4. Make a condensed summary or outline of the material reviewed, and study it thoroughly.
5. Review selectively. Give special attention to areas of the subject in which you are weak.
6. Cramming, as a concentrated review of material previously learned, is beneficial. BUT, cramming as a last minute effort to learn for the first time is harmful because it results in a confused mass of undigested material.
7. Predict questions which you would ask if you were the instructor, and then be sure you know the correct answers.
8. Find out from the instructor the kind of test that will be given and material to be covered.
9. Know the difference between essay and objective examinations.
10. Analyze previous and present examinations to determine your weaknesses.
11. While studying and working problems, duplicate the test situation by setting your alarm clock to ring at the end of a certain period of time.
12. When studying the night before an exam, reduce, restrict or eliminate caffeine. Caffeine will make you feel more awake, BUT, side effects of caffeine include rapid heart beat, headache, muscle tension, rapid breathing – all of which may be interpreted by some as test anxiety (which often has the same symptoms). Also the caffeine will keep you up – BUT make it difficult to go to sleep when you wish.
13. The night before an exam, get a good night's sleep so that your mind will be the most rested it can be for the exam.
14. A quick review of materials in the morning of an exam may help solidify points that are more difficult.

Reduce test distractions

Distractions take away from your ability to perform as well as you can while taking the exam. On the opposite side of the page are common distractions and their remedies.

DISTRACTION	REMEDY
Sleepiness	Get a good night's sleep before the test.
Nervousness/anxiety	Study well ahead of time and don't cram at the last minute. Cramming leads to panic and insecurity.
Full bladder	Go to the bathroom right before the test.
Upset stomach or tense stomach muscles	Relax stomach muscles and use over-the-counter or prescribed anti-acids appropriately.
Tense neck, shoulder, or chest muscles	Roll your head in a clockwise and then counter-clockwise full circle (2-3 times in each direction). Roll shoulder muscles in a clockwise and then counter-clockwise full circle (2-3 times in each direction). Relax your chest muscles by taking 5 deep, slow breaths and letting them out slowly.
Not having what you need with you	Bring all materials needed for the exam. If you bring too many things, you can leave them under your desk.
Discomfort from clothes	Wear loose fitting or comfortable close that won't distract you.
Cute person nearby	Sit where you can't see, hear, or smell them.
Windows	Sit away from the windows so you won't look out.
Concern about time	Wear a watch and use it to pace yourself.
Panic because you don't know the answer	Do easy questions first. Use scratch paper to "memory dump" everything you can remember to use them for answers later.