

Cramming for Tests

IT'S THE NIGHT BEFORE THE TEST and you've waited until the last minute! The week was just so busy and there was no time to effectively study. You are left with only one option - you'll have to "cram." Fortunately, there are strategies you can use to lead you from absolute panic to being able to calmly take the test.



IDENTIFY IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Review your classroom notes and study guides. Write down the main points that have been presented in class. If your instructor has ever said, "This will be on the exam," or "I like to test on this material," make sure you add that to your list. It may be good to review the textbook and write down main points. However, if the teacher has used the text only as reference material, spend the majority of your time reviewing the lecture notes. Use the text for reviewing diagrams and chapter summaries. *Be very selective in the material you write down.*

MAKE AN OUTLINE

Organize your list of main points into an outline form. This will help you organize the main points presented in class and in the reading. Recopying the information will also help you remember it better. After you have made your outline, put away all other notes and books. Use only the outline for your review. It is better to over-learn less information than to barely learn a lot of information. Learn less, but learn it better.

REVIEW OLD TESTS

If your test is comprehensive, review previous tests, quizzes, and study guides from your class or that your professor has placed on reserve. Study particularly those questions that you or a large portion of the class had difficulty answering. These questions have a habit of being repeated in future tests.

USE GOOD TEST-TAKING TECHNIQUES

Get adequate sleep before the exam so that you are as mentally alert as possible during the test. During the test, use good test taking strategies. For example, skip questions you don't know, so you can get to the information that you do know before you forget it. As soon as you get the test, write down hard-to-remember formulas and definitions before you begin. Later, you won't have to be concerned about recalling them. After you have answered the questions that you know, take a deep breath and go back to those you didn't know. Budget your time carefully in order to answer (or at least guess) every question.

SET SOME NEW GOALS

After the test, remind yourself you did your best under the circumstances, regardless of your score. Remember: cramming is merely a survival strategy. It is not an effective way to learn or study. It will, in the long run, hurt your academic success. Resolve to budget your review time better for your next test. Good luck!



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