

HOW TO ACE YOUR FINALS

A 2-MINUTE DO-AND-DON'T GUIDE

from academic coaches at the Learning Assistance Center

TAKE BREAKS

A good starting point is a 10-minute break for every 50 minutes of studying. You can break it down even further to a 5-minute break for every 25 minutes of studying. Breaks are essential **because they give our brains a brief amount of time to recover, allowing us to chain smaller chunks of studying together and, in turn, study longer.**

DIVERSIFY

Research shows that we retain information better when we learn it in different ways, because we have to **work to understand** it in unfamiliar formats. Read your textbooks and note cards aloud, teach material to a friend, and study in different locations or at different times of the day.

TEST YOURSELF

An exam is one big recall exercise. Use recall exercises in your studies to **simulate the way you will have to recall information for the exam.** Try online practice tests, questions in your textbook, and flashcards. Writing out flashcards is the best way to cement them in your mind, but **Quizlet.com** is great if you need to save time.

USE SPACED REPETITION

Studying 1 hour of biology each day for 3 days is much more effective than studying for 3 hours in 1 day because it **increases the number of times information has to be recalled.** If you have 3 exams, spend 1 hour studying for each exam, instead of 3 hours for just 1 exam.

KEEP PERSPECTIVE

Data tells us that **deemphasizing the importance of exams makes students perform better.** Remember, this exam is not a measure of your intelligence, but of how much information you can recall that day. Life will go on, regardless of the outcome of the exam. Put in the hours and then let it be as it will be.

Questions? Schedule an appointment: 513-556-3244 — uc.edu/lac — 2441 French Hall West

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DON'T JUST REREAD

There's a second part to it. Research shows that rereading your text can falsely inflate your sense of learning and understanding. Try reading a passage and then writing out everything that you can recall from memory, or reviewing your lecture notes and then taking a practice test without looking at them. **What we practice recalling today becomes more "recallable" in the future.**

DON'T HIGHLIGHT

Highlighting your text can fool your mind into thinking you are putting something in your brain, when **all you're really doing is moving your hand.** Try to utilize more active study techniques like flashcards, practice tests, and redoing old tests or quizzes.

DON'T CRAM

Would you try to bench-press 300 pounds your first time at the gym? Would you enter a 5k if you had not run since high school gym class? Your brain is like a muscle, and it can only handle so much exercise in one subject at a time. Plan accordingly and start studying well in advance, giving your brain time to organize and store all of the information you're reviewing.

DON'T OVERCAFFEINATE

Skip the espresso-laden coffee spiked with Red Bull on exam day. The safest bet is to maintain your typical caffeine intake and avoid any drastic changes the day of the exam. Also remember to stay hydrated—studies show that losing just 2% of your water stores can lead to reduced memory and mental "haziness".

DON'T PULL ALL-NIGHTERS

Many students treat all-nighters like a badge of honor. Let's change that this semester. Research shows that increasing sleep from 6 or fewer hours to 8 or more hours can increase memory and alertness by 25%! If you do not get a good night's sleep before a test, nothing else you will have done to prepare will matter!

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