10 Tips for Surviving Finals Week

1. Don’t panic

It is important not to engage with the panic but to find ways to distract yourself and calm down. The first thing to do is to check what the final is worth in each course. Remember, it is only one component of your final grade and depending on what it’s worth, it may not bring your final grade up or down by more than one grade level (e.g., B to B+), unless you perform extremely well or badly. However, you should try to do as well on the final as you possibly can and not limit yourself to getting a certain number of points to keep a grade.

2. Use an effective study method.

The key to effective retention is repetition, and not overloading your brain (it can only absorb so much in an hour). Whatever you do, don’t do it all in one long cramming session.

3. Get enough sleep.

Pulling an all-nighter is one of the worst things that you can do (short of accidentally sleeping through your final). You will do better if you are rested, and cramming often leads to a superficial and confused knowledge of the material you have studied. Fatigued brains do not retain information, nor do they recall it well.

4. Stay active and make time for "renewing" activities.

Exercise boosts blood flow to the brain, and sitting in one place for an extended period of time can lead to a tired, ill-supplied mind. You may not be able to squeeze in a full workout during finals week, but you do have time to go for a short walk or to do two sets of crunches or push-ups. Pace yourself! You will study more effectively if you spread things out and take breaks. But watch the proportions here. Beware of doing 15 minutes of studying followed by a two-hour break to play a video game!

5. Make the most of "off" days.

If you have a break in your exam schedule, use it to get a head start on the exams coming up. This can be a time to catch up on missed reading, or to complete a study method.

6. Silence your social media accounts

The reverse of focusing too intensely is not being able to focus at all. Turning off social media for an entire week may not be realistic or achievable for every student. Do, however, consider using it as a reward. Check in on your favorite platforms or websites for 10 to 15 minutes before going to bed or during your downtime. However, be aware of the “just for a moment” syndrome so that checking news headlines does not lead to an entire afternoon of watching hilarious cat videos and reading celebrity gossip.

7. Eat well

During finals week, you may be tempted to eat and drink whatever items are most convenient. However, the quick calories of processed carbohydrates will ultimately leave you exhausted. Eat foods that are digested slowly: whole grains, fresh vegetables, and lean proteins. Before a final, be sure to eat a meal that is high in protein. Most final exams
are more than an hour in length, and a sugar rush simply will not see you through. Likewise, taking an important test while hungry can be a recipe for disaster.

8. Verify the details and arrive on time for the exam

Be absolutely sure that you know when (and where) your finals will be held. Scrambling to find this information on the day of an exam will only serve to increase your nervousness. Be especially careful about setting your alarm the night before. Save yourself the anxiety and embarrassment of arriving late.

9. Don’t worry about others finishing earlier than you.

This could mean anything. One can’t say if these students have done a decent job on the exam. Take the time you need.

10. When the exam is over, let it go!

Forget it! Move on to the next one, or go enjoy the break! If you do have major concerns, make an appointment to see your professor at a mutually convenient time.

--- www.vpul.upenn.edu/shs/finals.php AND www.time.com