Preparing for Final Exams
Tips As You Prepare for Final Exams

1. Know what to expect. Find out as much as you can from the instructor about the test—format, topics covered, etc. Learn as much as you can from past tests in the class in terms of how the professor will test you.

2. Spread out your study time: give your brain time to absorb the information. Try reverse planning. Break up your assignments into achievable tasks. Example: for a paper due in 10 days—
   Day 1: read the assignment carefully.
   Day 2: jot down as many ideas as possible to include in the paper (a list or a web).
   Day 3: create an outline of your ideas and a to do list (such as reading more or researching).
   Day 4: write a first full draft.
   Day 5: get feedback from the Writing Center.
   Day 6: write a revision based on feedback.
   Day 7: read paper aloud and edit carefully for errors.
   Day 8: get more feedback from the Writing Center (and last chance to ask professor any questions).
   Day 9: print it out.
   Day 10: turn it in.

Or the 10 day plan to prep for a test: (ongoing—attend all classes, review notes within 24 hours of taking them, quiz yourself every other day on the material, read the most important concepts in the textbook)
   Day 1: get notes organized and get a clear sense of what will be on the test.
   Day 2: organize 2 study sessions—one for day 4 and one for day 8.
   Day 3: create discussion questions for study group.
   Day 4: meet with study group to create study goals for individual and group review.
   Day 5: skim to review textbook chapters.
   Day 6: prep for group review.
   Day 7: ask professor any questions at this point.
   Day 8: meet with study group for comprehensive review.
   Day 9: quiz yourself further, create mnemonic devices, etc. Get a good night’s sleep.
   Day 10: eat breakfast, take ten deep breaths, wear your favorite t-shirt and knock that test out of the water.

4. Read test questions carefully; check answers carefully. Avoid careless errors. Use all the time you are given. Survey the test at the start so you know what is most important to answer well.

5. Write on test questions (underline key words, etc.) to help you tackle it quickly. Pay close attention to words such as NOT or EXCEPT.
   - On multiple choice questions, treat each stem like a True/False question to help you narrow your choices and to move rapidly and efficiently through the problem.
   - Remember that multiple choice and true/false questions often require close reading and critical thinking. Pay attention to what is being said, and what would be the best answer, not just the ‘right’ answer.
   - On short answer and essay questions, jot down a quick outline of key points and concepts before you start writing your answers.

6. Use active study methods to study the material—fill out graphic organizers (www.lss.appstate.edu has a link to resources which links to graphic organizers you might use). Quiz yourself often; meet with classmates to review the material by discussing it and quizzing one another. Just looking at your notes and the book usually does not suffice on tough tests.

7. Once you understand the material, try using mnemonic devices to help you recall key information at test time (ROY G. BIV is the color spectrum; Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally is the order of operations; etc.)

8. Your brain is connected to the rest of your body. Take care of yourself. Get enough sleep. Eat healthy meals. Exercise. Manage stress. Keep a positive attitude—embrace the challenge and know that you will be rewarded soon with a semester break!
FINAL STUDY PLAN and DEADLINES

TO DO LIST
List all projects, papers, tests, etc.        Due dates

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Final Exam Information
List your current classes              Type of final (comprehensive, test, paper, etc.)

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Advice on ways to manage stress and test anxiety

Dealing with thoughts:
1. **Yell stop!**
When you notice your thoughts are racing, cluttered with worries & fears, mentally yell, “stop!” This may help you break the cycle of worry, and then try the following steps.

2. **Daydream**
Fill your mind with pleasant thoughts, so there’s no room for anxiety.

3. **Visualize success**
Be specific in imagining what you want to see go right. It’ll increase the odds that you’ll live up to your good expectations (rather than dwelling on worst case scenarios).

4. **Focus**
Focus on a specific object, a tree, the scratches on your watch. During an exam, listen to the sound of the lights in the room, touch the surface of your desk and notice the texture. Concentrate all your attention on one point. Don’t leave room for anxiety-related thoughts.

5. **Praise yourself**
Talk to yourself in a positive way. “I am relaxed” “I am doing a great job on this test” etc.

6. **Consider the worst**
Consider the worst that could happen, to the point of absurdity. You may find you can then laugh it off. You may also find that life goes on even if the worst happens!

Dealing with feelings…
1. **Breathe**
Regular deep breaths can help you calm yourself.

2. **Scan your body**
Close your eyes and think through each muscle, deliberately relaxing each part of your body.

3. **Tense and relax**
If a particular part of your body is tense, make it more tense, then relax.

4. **Use guided imagery**
Relax and take a quick fantasy trip, such as being at the beach. With practice, you can even use this technique while you are taking a test.

5. **Exercise aerobically**
Regular exercise will help you relax.

6. **Make healthy eating choices**

6. **Get help**
It can be helpful to meet with a counselor to discuss the challenges you face and practice strategies.
Counseling.appstate.edu  828 262-3180