

Put a **check mark** next to the suggestions that you already do.

Put a **star** next to the suggestions that you don't currently do but that might be helpful.

PLANNING

- _____ 1. To decrease stress, start studying at least 1-2 weeks ahead, depending on how many finals you have. The worst thing to do is procrastinate.
- _____ 2. Six to ten hours of studying per course may be necessary to know the material well and earn a good grade. So you need to begin studying at least five days before the exam so you can study in shorter blocks of time. Research has shown that short, frequent study sessions -- for example, studying in 30- to 60-minute intervals followed by short breaks -- are much more effective than non-stop cramming because your brain can better process the information. Remember: cramming isn't really learning.
- _____ 3. Prioritize your studying. What's more important in each course? Class notes? The textbook? Other assigned readings? Guest speakers? Films? Previous tests? Don't underestimate the importance of the textbook.
- _____ 4. Set a goal for each study session to keep track of what you need to learn. Write out your goals at the beginning of your study session, or at the end of each study session, write goals for your next session. For example: "I will carefully read and summarize chapters 3 and 4." "I will work through five equations." "I will learn the main concepts from the lectures in weeks 1-3."
- _____ 5. Narrow your focus. If you try to learn *everything* that could be on the exam, you might spread yourself too thin and you won't be able to learn anything thoroughly.
- _____ 6. Ask yourself what questions you would ask if you were the professor.
- _____ 7. Find out if your professor makes any practice exams available.
- _____ 8. Make arrangements with the appropriate people (boss, co-workers, family members) to have ample time to study and to arrive at your exams on time.

GENERAL STUDY SUGGESTIONS

- _____ 9. Learn concepts first, details second.
- _____ 10. Paraphrase as you read. Keep saying to yourself, "Oh, I see, she's saying _____."
- _____ 11. Focus on examples. They can help you understand concepts and complex ideas.
- _____ 12. Talk with your professors after class or during office hours. Ask them to explain anything you find confusing.
- _____ 13. Analyze previous tests. If your professor kept them, go to her/his office and ask to look at yours.
- _____ 14. Move beyond memorization. Aim for deeper understanding.

- _____ 15. Use flashcards sparingly. Some students spend hours making cards but don't spend enough time actually using them. Cards can be useful for memorizing isolated facts but they may not be as helpful for learning and understanding ideas.
- _____ 16. Map out the main ideas covered in the course and then find links and relationships.
- _____ 17. Try to visualize the information. Use the half of your brain that works in pictures.
- _____ 18. Think actively while you study. Don't just passively re-read your notes. Re-write your notes in language that you understand. Compare your notes to the textbook and add details. Make study sheets from your notes.
- _____ 19. If you retain information well when you hear it, tape yourself summarizing material and then listen to it. Or recite the information aloud; pretend you're teaching it to someone else.
- _____ 20. Use an empty classroom to write concepts on the board (the large size may help).
- _____ 21. Change your surroundings to avoid fatigue.
- _____ 22. Take care of yourself. Reserve a little time for some exercise and relaxation.
- _____ 23. At all costs, avoid drugs, prescription or otherwise, to stay awake or enhance your performance. They may be habit-forming, and they don't help you really learn the material.
- _____ 24. Get a good night's sleep before each final.
- _____ 25. Before morning exams, try to eat something nutritious.
- _____ 26. Keep a positive attitude.
- _____ 27. Be sure to attend the last few classes of the semester. Professors may explain exam format and invite you to ask questions about the material.

STUDYING WITH OTHERS

- _____ 28. If you study well with others, form a small study group of 2-4 serious students. Take turns explaining material to one another. Write practice test questions and quiz one another; be sure that your questions are similar to what your professor writes.
- _____ 29. If you're working with a tutor, ask to meet for an additional session close to the exam. Explain difficult material to the tutor, so s/he can confirm or clarify your understanding.

AFTER EXAMS

- _____ 30. The following semester, return to look over your final exams, or ask the professor to mail your exam to you (provide a self-addressed stamped envelope). Professors are surprised at how few students ask to see their graded exams. After you devote so much time and effort to studying (and your professor spends time grading your exam), you should care about the result. Not looking at your final exam may suggest that you care more about your grade than about learning the material.

Preparing for finals: Rate yourself on each statement below with this scale

5 - Yes 4 - Almost 3 - Somewhat 2 - Not so much 1 - Not at all

1. ____ I know the time and location of all my exams.
2. ____ I have made arrangements with the appropriate people (e.g. boss, co-workers, parents, family members) so I can have ample time for studying for my tests.
3. ____ I have made arrangements with the appropriate people (e.g. boss, co-workers, parents, family members) so I can be on time for my exams and take my time during the tests.
4. ____ I have read all my assignments.
5. ____ I have completed all course work (e.g., papers, quizzes, projects).
6. ____ I have access to study guides or have created my own.
7. ____ I know what will be covered on my exams.
8. ____ I have created and answered practice tests.
9. ____ I know the definitions of all relevant terms.
10. ____ My study techniques help me make memorable connections.
11. ____ I know the material on the exam well enough to explain it to someone else.
12. ____ In reference to exams, my anxiety level is low.
13. ____ If my exams were today, I could at least pass them all.
14. ____ I have resources to get answers to any questions I have in preparing for my exams.
15. ____ I know what I need to score on the exams for each of my classes in order to get the grade I need/want in the course.
16. ____ I know what to do if I have too many tests on one day or if I need to take my exam(s) at a different time than scheduled.
17. ____ I have organized my schedule to be able to get sufficient, regular sleep during exam week.

Total: _____

Interpretation

- If your score is between **69 and 85**, congratulations! You're prepared to do a great job on your finals!
- If your score is between **52 and 68**, you've got some work to do but your prospects of doing well on exams are good.
- If your score is between **34 and 51**, it's unlikely you will do well on exams without some help.
- If your score is between **17 and 33**, you have a lot to do to be ready for finals. You may want to make an appointment with a study skills specialist in the Office of Academic Support.

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