

STUDYING FOR EXAMS

EVERY DAY:

- For each of your classes, **spend 10 minutes going over the notes you took that day.**
- Use the **Cornell System for taking notes**, with headings or questions to the left and details on the right. When you're ready to study, cover the right side of the notes and quiz yourself.
- Constantly **paraphrase as you read.** In other words, talk to yourself: "Oh, I see, she's saying ___."
- Stop at the end of a paragraph to highlight a phrase or to write a brief note in the margin.
- **Focus on charts, diagrams, and outlines**, especially in the sciences.
- If the textbook is very difficult, **buy a review book and use that to preview a given chapter** in your text. Understanding the simplified version beforehand can really help, and it doesn't increase your study time (you will be able to read the textbook more quickly).

DON'T JUST MEMORIZE:

- Be sure to **paraphrase ideas** and relate one idea to another.
- **Study with another student or with a group.** Try to explain what you've learned to your study partners, don't simply recite information, explain the *how* and *why*.
- **Focus on examples** because they can frequently help you understand complex ideas.
- Visualize the information if you can. (Half of your brain works in pictures, so use that half.)
- Talk with your professors after class and ask them to explain ideas you find confusing

DECIDE WHAT TO LEARN:

- **Narrow your focus.** If you try to learn everything that might possibly be tested, you will simply spread yourself too thin and you won't be able to learn anything thoroughly.
- Pay close attention to the following: **study guides, review sessions, topics mentioned in the class before the exam, material written on the board or overhead.**
- Ask other students what they think will be on the exam. Talk to the professor.

REVIEW TOOLS:

- Write **summary sheets, charts, or diagrams.** Be brief, trying to condense and paraphrase.
- **Use flashcards sparingly.** Some students spend hours making cards but don't allow enough time to actually use them. Cards can be useful for memorizing isolated facts but they aren't helpful for learning ideas. One way to avoid the busy work of making cards is by using the Cornell System instead. As you take notes in class, you are creating a method for quizzing yourself later

MEMORIZING

- Relate the new information to **something you already know.**
- **Walk around** while reciting your notes or quizzing yourself.
- Avoid marathon study sessions and instead, review frequently and in small "doses" with many breaks.
- Use mnemonic devices for large lists or facts that are difficult to recall.

PRACTICE EXAMS

- Ask the professor for a **copy of an old exam or a few sample questions.** What does the professor think is important and how does he/she ask a question?
- Before problem solving exams, **give yourself practice exams.** If the professor makes a practice exam available, use that as a model or **use questions at the end of a chapter.**
- **Do at least one timed practice exam.** Many math exams can be difficult to finish in time, so you need to practice working under time constraints.

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