

Before You Begin Studying

- Know what you are in for: Get as much information as possible about the exam's content, format, and marking scheme.
- Try to get sample exam questions from the teacher.
- Find out the date, time and location of the exam.
- If you have an exam conflict, let your two teachers know and report the problem to the main office and your Vice Principal
- Get help if you need it.
- Make a realistic study schedule. Your hardest courses will need more time to study, so
plan.
- Remember your teacher may give hints on what to study – listen closely.

Five to Seven Days Prior to the Exam

- Read all notes from classroom lectures and reading assignments
- If you are missing notes/handouts get them.
- Remember studying means thinking and working with a pen, not passively reading. Underline, highlight and make notations in the margins of your notebook.
- Use your notes, text, course outline/objectives to create a checklist of the topics you have covered in the course.

Make a detailed summary sheet for each major topic. In your summary sheet include things like – critical definitions, calculations, themes, formulas, and points emphasized in class.

This process can take 4-6 hours to do.

- Review any previous tests you have had in the course. These tests can help you to determine your teacher's style of questioning as well as help you identify what is important.

- Analyze errors you have made in the past. Recognize where you lost marks so you can avoid the same mistake.
- If you work with a study partner or group, be selective whom you pick. Choose people who can stay focused. Working with someone else can give you a new perspective so compare notes, brainstorm test questions, and practice teaching each other.
- Work in an appropriate place. Work in a peaceful, secluded, well-lit area where you are not constantly disturbed. If you cannot stand the silence, try playing soft music (without words). Avoid your bed and soft chairs- they tend to promote sleep.
- Vary your study patterns. Study chemistry then French instead of Chemistry then Biology.
- Set up a schedule where you study for 40 minutes then take a ten-minute break.

Two to Five Days Prior to the Exam

- Work extensively and repeatedly with the master lists.
- Stay healthy – it helps to improve your performance on exams.
- See your teacher to ask any last minute questions if you have them.
- Use strategies to help reduce forgetting.
 1. Test yourself as you study
 2. Use the 3R's – *Read, wRite, Recite*
 3. Say what you have to memorize aloud or in your head or explain the information to someone. Repeat a concept until you know it, then say it five more times
 4. Put concepts into your own words. This forces you to think about them
 5. Use mnemonics
 - a) Acronyms – IPMAT interphase, **p**rophase, **m**etaphase, **a**naphase, **t**elephase – the *stages of cell division*
 - b) Analogies - lungs =trees; pump=heart

6. Try using a concept map. Put the most important ideas in the centre, then include various branches to show the relationships between other ideas and their sub categories.
 7. Draw diagrams to show a pictorial representation of the subject.
 8. Use flash cards. They are great for memorizing definitions, vocabulary, facts, formulae, etc. Or write the question on one side of the card and the answer on the other.
- Make sure you know where the test site is and know how much time it takes to get there.

The Night before the Exam

- Give yourself one final read through of the master lists.
- Talk your way through possible essays
- Make a cram sheet of terms you still cannot master
- Gather the supplies you will need to bring to the exam: pens (that work), watch, snack, your final cram sheet, and other materials you may need (such as a calculator, books)
- Get a good night sleep. You should be getting at least 6 hours per night.
- Set your alarm before you go to sleep. Inform other family members how important tomorrow is for you.

The Day of the Exam

- Talk about some key terms and general themes in the shower for a mental warm up.
- Eat a meal. Foods high in carbohydrates provide energy.

- If you have an afternoon exam, use the morning for a final read-through of your master lists.
- Make certain you bring writing utensils and a watch to the exam.
- If you lost your textbook, inform your teacher and the main office. You will need a special admit slip to write the exam.
- Double check that you know the section number of your course. There is no guarantee that your classroom teacher will be supervising your exam.
- Get to the exam early so you can return your textbook to the classroom teacher and choose a good seat.

Writing the Exam

- Arrive early and relax. This brief time allows you to gain confidence, collect positive thoughts and focus your mind.
- Use whatever strategies you need in order to fight panic. For example, have a plan on how to approach the exam, and avoid sitting by alarmists. Realize that being prepared is the best way to avoid panic.
- Listen attentively to last minute instructions given by the supervisor of the test. You often receive helpful instructions before the test is given out.
- Write your name in the space provided on the exam.
- Read instructions carefully. When you read the instructions, make sure you understand them. For example, sometimes on multiple choice questions it may be possible to pick more than one answer. Try to translate difficult questions into everyday, conversational speech.
- Take the examination strategically; keep a clear head, watch the time, and pace yourself. Follow your own pace and don't let the pace of others make you nervous.
- Jot down some points, which relate to each question, and add ideas during the examination. This technique can free up memory space and reduce pressure when time is running out. Maybe the last few things you write can be the points you have identified earlier. Your teacher would rather have point form answers than blank spaces. Number/identify the questions you have attempted and sort them properly for teacher marking.
- Some students find that it gives them an advantage to answer the easy questions first to allow more time to tackle the difficult questions. Experts

recommend leaving essay and sentence completion questions for the last because you sometimes find answers among the already completed objective questions. But if you leave the essays for last, leave enough time to outline your thoughts and then write a clear answer.

- Keep a steady pace and avoid lingering too long on difficult questions. If you are not penalized for wrong answers, guess. Don't leave blanks!
- Aim to keep your full attention on the examination and do not daydream.
- Change answers only when you are certain. Usually your first thought is correct.
- When you have completed the exam, review the difficult questions, proofread essays, check grammar and spelling and make sure you have answered all the questions. It is not uncommon for a student to forget a question on the backside of a page.

Answering True or False Questions

The best way to prepare for true and false testing is concentrated hours of study to face facts into your memory. Teachers try to test your memory of the material by slightly altering the questions. Therefore, it is crucial to read all questions carefully.

- There are usually more true than false answers on a test.
- When reading the question, look for any factor that makes the question false. Often instructors add a false part on the tail end of an otherwise true statement. Students mistakenly see some truth and assume the entire statement is true.
- Look for extreme modifiers that tend to make the question false. Answers that have "always" or "never" in them are usually false since almost nothing is true or false 100% of the time. The following is a list of extreme modifiers:

all	none	best	absolutely
always	never	worst	absolutely not
only	nobody	everybody	certainly
invariably	No one	everyone	certainly not

- Identify qualifiers that can make a question true. Qualifiers (seldom, often, many) make the question more likely to be true. The following is a list of common qualifiers:

usually	frequently	often	sometimes
some	seldom	many	much
probably	a majority	apt to	most
might	A few	may	unlikely

- Remember the English language can be very confusing. Watch out for negative words and how they affect the truth. Prefixes (un-, im-, miss-) will alter the meaning of a statement. Double negatives make the statement true. For example, "not uncommon" actually means common.
- Be sure to understand how these questions are to be evaluated. Are the wrongs subtracted from the rights? Do false answers have to be corrected?

ANSWERING MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- Try to answer the questions before you look at the answer given.
- Use the process of elimination when you do not know the answer for sure. Eliminate two alternatives quickly and then decide between the two remaining choices.
- Remember your first instinct is usually correct when picking an answer. Don't change your answer unless you are sure you made a mistake.
- Try not to look for trick questions; there usually aren't any.
- Watch the meaning of sentences containing double negatives. Cross out both negatives and then answer the question.
- If you are having trouble finding an answer
 - Rephrase the question so that you understand it.
 - Underline or circle key words
 - Look for answers in other test questions
 - Guess. Never leave a question unanswered unless there is a penalty for mistakes

- If you have to guess , consider the following
 - If two answers are similar, choose one of them
 - If two answers have similar words (perpetuate, perpetrate) choose one of them.
 - If two answers have opposite meanings, choose one of them.
 - Choose the longest answer
 - If none of the other work, choose (b). Studies prove that (b) is the correct answer 40% of the time; (c) is right 30% of the time, (a) 20% and (d) only 10% of the time.

ANSWERING MATCHING QUESTIONS

- Before you begin, look at both lists to determine the items and their relationships being reviewed.
- Check to see that there are an equal number of matches between the two columns.
- Use one list as the starting point and go through the second list to find a match. This keeps yur thoughts organized.
- Move through the entire list before selecting a match. You never know if another answer is even better match farther down the list.
- Cross off items on the second list when you are certain you have a match. This process gives you confidence and keeps you organized.
- Do not guess until all absolute matches are made. Guessing too early could eliminate an answer that could be used for a later choice.

ANSWERING SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS OR FILL-IN-THE –BLANKS

- Look for grammatical hints when you read a question. For example, a sentence that begins with "An_____ " indicates that the unknown word starts with a vowel.

- Concentrate on the number of blanks in the sentence and the length of the space. Test makers sometimes give you clues to the answer by adding spaces and making them longer.
- If you don't know the exact word expected for the space try using a descriptive answer. *Sometimes* the instructor will give you part marks for your ideas.

ANSWERING ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Read the instructions carefully! If it states underline or highlight the main and supporting details, "answer two essay questions" answer only two.
- Organize your thoughts before you begin to write. A short outline on a separate piece of paper will improve your thinking. There is usually a main idea or issue, several supporting issues and examples to illustrate the issues.
- Read each question with the intent to identify the action verbs and give you direction. Circle the direct verbs (ie. explain, summarize) and do the task requested.
- Paraphrase the original question to form your introductory statement. This keeps you organized and the teacher can see how you understood the question.
- Make your answer easy to read. Use pen, double space your answer, number your pages and write on only one side of the page.
- Use the principles of good English composition when answering all types of essay questions
 - form a clear thesis (statement of purpose) and place it near the beginning of your answer.
 - provide supporting issues to back up the main concept you present
 - use your strongest points first to make an immediate impact.
 - underline or highlight the main and supporting details
 - if possible, provide examples that will make your answer look great
 - save space/time for a brief but adequate summary