

5-day Study Plan

test taking

Use this 5-day study plan to get a jump on studying. If you spread your review over several days, you'll avoid cramming and you'll find that you are a more successful test taker.

Begin by counting backwards from the exam date, and set aside time each day (60-90 minutes) for review during your most alert hours. Make a list of chapters, lecture topics, and outside readings to be covered on the exam. Then **divide the material into five sections** and review one section each day.

5 Days Before the Exam

- Review your notes to discover if you are missing information from lectures or chapters. Complete course reading and obtain missing material.
- Locate your study guide—or create one of your own. This will be your check list of all the material you need to review for your test.
- Review one section of the material, starting with the oldest material. Use your textbook review questions and lecture notes.
- Use active study strategies, such as creating flashcards for vocabulary or dates. Or create a graphic organizer to sort information into categories or steps.

4 Days Before the Exam

- Do a 10-minute review of the first section of material.
- Meet with a study group to review the second “chunk” of material.
- Use active study strategies, such as mimicking the format of the test. Create possible essay, short answer, or multiple choice questions and then practice answering them.

3 Days Before the Exam

- Do a 20-minute review of all of the material you've studied so far.
- Review the third section of the material and then quiz yourself on what you've studied.
- Use active study strategies, such as summarizing the chapters or concepts verbally or in writing. Try teaching or explaining a concept to a friend or a “stand-in.”

2 Days Before the Exam

- Do a 30-minute review of the material you've studied so far.
- Review the fourth section of the material, creating mnemonic devices (memory tricks) to remember details.
- Practice using your mnemonic device in answering possible essay questions. Use active study strategies, such as creating mind maps or other visual representations of the material.

1 Day Before the Exam

- Do a 30-40 minute review of all of the material you've studied so far.
- Now review the last section of the material.
- Use active study strategies, such as covering up the material and rewriting definitions from memory. Come up with an example of key term or definition.
- Return to your study guide. Spend 10 minutes writing or talking out loud about the concepts of each of the 5 sections you have reviewed (50 minutes total).
- Go to bed early. Lack of sleep accounts for most problems with concentration and memory.

Learning From Your Exams: Where Were Your Gaps?

After the exam, try to meet with your faculty to go over your test. In preparation, use this quick reflection tool to determine where you need to supplement your review process for next time. If you can identify your areas of greatest difficulty, you can work to effectively correct the problems.

- I didn't understand the material when it was being explained in class.
- I did not remember encountering some of the material in class or in the text.
- I did not study long enough or start early enough.
- I didn't study the right material.
- I studied the material but could not recall it for the test.
- I recognized the information but was not able to use or apply it.
- I memorized the definitions but was unable to use or apply concepts.
- I didn't know the meaning of some of the vocabulary used on the test.
- I didn't follow directions or record my answers correctly.
- I didn't use my time well during the test.
- I was too anxious/worried/upset/frustrated to concentrate.