

# YOU CAN DO IT!

## Preparing for Your Final Exams

---

### **Prioritize your studying.**

Evaluate your upcoming exams. Which are worth the most for your final grade? What material do you understand least? Answering these questions will help you determine how to best maximize your study time and energy.

### **Space out your study sessions.**

Science shows that shorter, more frequent study sessions are far more effective at promoting long-term learning than cramming for several hours right before an exam. Start scheduling short sections of time now leading up to your final exams.

### **Mix up what you study.**

Instead of studying a single subject for a long period, switch it up! Study one subject for a while, then switch to a new topic. It's a great way to maintain focus and prevent burnout.

### **Practice, practice, practice.**

In experimental studies, students who took practice tests throughout the process of learning were better able to recall information later than students who took only one practice test at the end. Repeated practice helps reinforce learning.

### **Read with intention.**

Rather than simply re-read material, ask yourself questions about it, such as, "How could I use what I learned here?," "How does this relate to my own experiences?," and "How might this connect to other subjects I've learned?" Wrestling with material helps you understand and recall it easier.

### **Get help.**

Follow-up with your instructor, visit tutoring, go to the Writing Center, create a study group, and/or teach your goldfish to better understand what you understand. It's not too late to reach out for help to master an algorithm, gain helpful study tips, or create better written work.

### **Find examples.**

Think about ways you could use a concrete example to explain an abstract concept. For example, the way prices for airline tickets increase as spaces fill on the plane illustrates the economic concept of scarcity. Making these connections help you understand and recall information easier.

### **Test yourself.**

Write questions that you think your instructor would ask about the material, then attempt to answer them. Challenge yourself to do more than simply define subjects—ask yourself to compare and contrast topics, apply information in real-world settings, and put information together to solve problems.

### **Teach others.**

Explaining concepts to a classmate is a great way to make sure you really understand the material yourself—and to help them learn as well. When you find new ways to explain a concept, you are mastering the information by processing it for others.

**More tips! >>>>**

## BONUS TIP: Be kind to yourself.

Learning new material can be difficult, and it may take many attempts to fully understand a topic or concept. Give yourself some grace, acknowledge that you are trying the best you can, and stay positive. Remind yourself that while you may not know it yet, you eventually will.

Being kind to yourself includes taking good care of yourself. Eating healthy foods, practicing self-care, and getting plenty of sleep not only help you feel better, they actually help your brain process and retain information better, too.

## Test Day Tips

You've used the tips above to prepare for your tests, but what actions can take on the day of your final exams to do your best?

- ▶ **Eat before your tests.** Many nutritionists suggest meals high in protein but follow your usual practices if they help you feel ready.
- ▶ **Stay hydrated.** A study from the University of Connecticut reports that mild dehydration increases headaches and perceived difficulty of tasks and decreases concentration.
- ▶ **Look over the entire exam first, then:**
  - Set a pace for yourself to ensure you complete the whole exam.
  - Tackle easier questions first. They will build your confidence for the tougher questions.
  - If you get stumped on a question, move on and answer others. You may find that a later question will help you answer it.
  - Don't be afraid to skip around when answering questions. Take a few moments near the end of the test to review and ensure you have answered them all.
  - If you feel nervous, tap your fingers lightly on your knee. This can help get those nerves out without distracting others.
  - If you feel stressed, take a few seconds to breathe deeply and exhale a few times, then return to the exam.
  - Practicing positive self-talk is essential! Counter any negative self-talk by telling yourself you can (and will) do well.



ROBERT AND MARY COX  
COMPASS  
CENTER