Exams probably cause more anxiety, fear, anger and complaints than any other aspect of college. Exams are the least painful and the most beneficial when they are approached with a positive attitude. Exam-taking can be viewed as an art; a skill that can be learned and appreciated when seen rationally.

Exams serve several useful purposes. In addition to revealing how well you work under pressure and how effectively you can retain and retrieve information, exams can afford you the opportunity to assimilate facts and ideas into a related and comprehensive picture they can provide a bird’s-eye view of the entire subject. Therefore, exams can be seen as a tool to evaluate learning and self-improvement.

**GENERAL STUDY TIPS**

1. Review *regularly* throughout the semester to avoid cramming.
2. *Find out* as much as you can about the exam.
3. *Assess* whether you have read *all* required material, have a *complete* set of notes, and have *finished* all assignments.
4. Be sure you have an *overall understanding* of the course and the *frame of reference* of the instructor. Also, learn the *technical vocabulary* for the course; each field of study has characteristic words.
5. *Survey* all required material and *focus* on aspects that the exam will cover.
7. Seek *assistance* when necessary.
8. Try to *predict* exam questions based on what has been emphasized in lectures and in the text.
9. *Memorize* facts as needed. Facts are often easier to learn within the *context* of various concepts and topics, rather than in isolation.
10. Study for each test as if it were an *essay* exam.
11. Review by using different techniques (flash cards, group study, summary sheets, etc.).

12. Use previous exams and quizzes for review.

13. Prepare a pre-exam schedule.
   a. *Space out* your study periods. It is better to study a subject an hours a night for three nights than to spend three hours in one night on the same subject.
   b. Devote the night before the exam for an overall review of the subject material.

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**GENERAL EXAM STRATEGY**

1. Survey the entire exam before beginning.
   a. Read the directions carefully.
   b. Skim exam questions.
   c. Note the number of items on the test.
   d. Note the distribution of points on the various sections of the test.

2. Read the directions carefully. *Pause, think* and *organize* your thoughts before answering a question.

3. Estimate and allocate time for items or different sections of the test according to the number of points assigned to them.

4. In analyzing exam questions:
   - Do not read into the questions.
   - Do not read out the questions.

5. Allocate enough time for review before turning the test in.

6. When the exam is returned, review all mistakes to strengthen your understanding in the areas where errors were made.
Objective/Multiple choice exams

1. Do the questions you can **readily answer** first to build your confidence and to help you relax. Don’t spend too much time on any single item; make a notation of it in the margin and return to it later.

2. Answer **all questions**. Leaving a question unanswered assure no points for that question. **Guess** if there is no penalty for guessing.

3. Read **questions** and **all alternatives** carefully and thoroughly.

4. **First impressions** are usually the best unless you can specifically state why you are making a change.

5. **Absolute** terms (e.g., always, never, only, must) may indicate **incorrect** answers.

6. **Qualifying** terms (e.g., sometimes, could, should, believe) may indicate **correct** answers.

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Short-answer/Fill-in-the-blank exams

1. These exams generally ask for **definitions** or **short descriptions**. Here’s where knowing the new vocabulary really pays off.

2. When studying, concentrate on **key words** and **facts**.

3. Be **concise** in your answers.
Essay exams

1. Determine precisely what the question is asking.

2. Organize your thoughts before writing. It is helpful to develop a quick outline, or diagram, before starting to write.

3. Write clearly, concisely and legibly – Define, give examples, summarize.

4. Use a pen if possible and write on only one side of the paper.

True/False exams

1. Read the test directions carefully; some true-false tests are made more challenging by directing you to underline the elements that make a statement false or to revise false statements to make them true.

2. Absolute terms (e.g., always, never, only, must) may indicate false answers.

3. Qualifying terms (e.g., sometimes, could, should, believe) may indicate true answers.

4. If there is more than one fact to the statement, check the correctness of each part. Unless the entire statement is true, you should mark it false.

Open-book exams

1. Open book exams are generally the most difficult so preparation is critical.

2. Write out all formulas.

3. Tab or clip important pages.

4. Organize your notes and develop a table of contents.

*For further assistance, come to the Learning Assistance Center, Student Services, 3rd floor, Room 306