

# PREPARING FOR AND TAKING EXAMS

*"Don't wish for it. Work for it." - Anonymous*

## THE BASICS:

- Eat regularly and get a proper night's sleep before the exam.
- Suspend your other activities and, if possible, take time off from your part-time job.
- Ask your teacher what topics and what type of questions will be on the exam.
- Speak to your teacher or see a peer tutor about material you do not understand.
- In certain courses, such as math, you can ask for copies of previous exams.
- Form a study group to review the material and test each other.
  - See the handout: **Learning with a Study Group.**



## PREPARING FOR EXAMS:

- Keep up with your weekly reading assignments and take notes on them.
  - See the handout: **A Reading Strategy for Textbooks.**
- Go through your class and textbook notes: make an outline of main ideas and supporting details, write a summary of main ideas, formulate potential exam questions, create concept/mind maps, create images to represent ideas, etc.
  - See the handouts: **Using Your Notes to Study** and **Cue Words in Exam Questions and Assignment Instructions.**

## PREPARING FOR ESSAY EXAMS:

**Because you must express your position and support it with evidence:**

- Practice organizing and restating ideas from the course rather than just rereading your textbook and class notes. Think about how you would support or prove each point.
- Practice stating the ideas in your own words. If you can do this before the exam, you will be able to do this during the exam.
- If you know the questions beforehand, you can prepare by outlining and writing the entire essay. Memorize your outline so you can rewrite the essay when taking the exam.

## TAKING ESSAY EXAMS:

- Examine and think about each question carefully, determining exactly what is being asked. Underline key words and phrases.
- Write brief notes based on the key information required.
- Ensure your essay addresses the question directly and provides specific support.
- Prepare a brief outline—your thesis and a list of supporting points.
- Remember the importance of opening each paragraph with a clear topic sentence.
- Write something for every question. Something is better than nothing.
- Write clearly and neatly. This creates a positive attitude in the exam marker.



# PREPARING FOR AND TAKING EXAMS

Continued

## TAKING MULTIPLE CHOICE EXAMS:

- Go through the exam and answer the questions you are sure about first.
- Underline the key words and phrases in the questions.
- Cover up the answers before you read the question. Answer the question in your head, and then choose the response which best fits your answer.
- Never leave questions unanswered unless it is clear that incorrect answers count against you.



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## MORE STRATEGIES FOR ANSWERING MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS:

- When in doubt, go with your first guess.
- Use information from other questions and/or answers.
- Eliminate the answers that are clearly not correct.
- Absolute words such as **always**, **never**, **none**, and **all** are often seen in false statements.



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## PREPARING FOR LANGUAGE EXAMS:

- Break vocabulary lists into small, related sets.
- Memorize them over several sessions.
- Practice grammar by writing sentences related to your own life.



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## PREPARING FOR MATH AND SCIENCE EXAMS:

- Memorize the formulas so you can write them down when the exam starts.
- Memorize all terms that are in **bold print** or *italics* in your text.
- Practice doing problems. Ask your teacher for copies of old exams. Write them in the same time limits as your exam.
- Work to understand how different terms or concepts relate to one another and the whole topic. Without this framework, it is ineffective remember clusters of unconnected facts.



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For more information, contact the Academic Skills Centre (ASC).