

Best Practices in Student Test Prep

ORIENT your studying and active review with these ideas:

- Elaboration:** How does this concept relate to other concepts?
- Distinctiveness:** How is this concept different from other concepts?
- Appropriate to Retrieval & Application:** How am I expected to use or apply this concept?
How much & how thoroughly can I write and solve and remember without my notes?

Generate meaningful **QUESTIONS** to model the upcoming test; Qs based on –

connections between ideas	implications and significance
compare/contrast ideas	examples that tie ideas together

PRACTICE retrieving and using the information in the way the teacher expects

- practice recall without referring to notes (out loud helps!)
- practice **using** the information

Remember, recognizing a solution is not the same as solving a problem.

Test Prep w/ SQ3R Method

- **Survey** Look for the most important topics. Re-read introductions, conclusions, & diagrams.
- **Question** Generate questions & quiz yourself . Add Qs, & include effective orienting approaches.
- **Read** Review relevant material until you can answer Qs completely and fluently without checking notes.
- **Recite** Use your own words and speak aloud. This forces you to use whole language and coherent ideas.
- **Review** Identify areas where you need help and ask directed questions to get specific support.

Pacing Work & Getting Help

Create mini-deadlines (25%, 50%, 75% ready) to pace yourself for effective studying.

1. **Assess & Evaluate** -- skim to figure out what you have to do, and what looks easier or harder, put check marks or question marks next to each problem in an assignment.
2. **Attempt** -- try all the easy stuff first, then try the harder stuff with question marks
 - Use resources -- use your book and/or notes to try and figure out the harder stuff, but don't bang your head against a wall here
 - Identify the problem -- when you get "stuck" and stay "stuck", write down **WHY** you are confused or **WHAT** you don't know or understand before moving on... use a "sticky" note that can later be moved to a study guide page for review.
3. **Strategic Intervention** -- with a classmate, peer tutor, or professor; explain (RECITE from SQ3R) what you do know and show WHY or WHAT you don't; get help based on specific problems you identified
 - This allows you (and /with your support resources) to identify patterns of problems, and target specific help for concepts or applications that are troublesome
4. **Reflect, Re-Attempt, Review** -- Try again on your own. Find new stumbling blocks. Use notes/book resources more efficiently. Keep practicing the same problems until you get them right, and look for other challenging problems to attempt to help you get ready for exams. Figure out, write, and solve your own questions.

Chunking Time

→ Don't try to learn well while multitasking

Spend 20-40 minutes focused ONLY on work.

Put away your phone, but set an alarm. Minimize distractions. Choose a task for this much time.

NOTE: if you are "in the zone" keep going!

Take a 5 minute break.

Stand up or stretch. Drink water and have a snack. Check in socially every hour.

Repeat.

Test Prep Checklist Chemical Engineering Education, 33(2), 136-137 (1999)

Answer "Yes" if you USUALLY did the things described.

Answer "No" if you SOMETIMES or NEVER did it.

Homework

___ ___ Did you make a serious effort to understand the text? (Just hunting for
Yes No relevant worked-out examples doesn't count.)

___ ___ Did you work with classmates on homework problems, or at least check
Yes No your solutions with others?

___ ___ Did you attempt to outline every homework problem solution before
Yes No working with classmates?

___ ___ Did you participate actively in homework group discussions (contributing
Yes No ideas, asking questions)?

___ ___ Did you consult with the instructor or teaching assistants when you were
Yes No having trouble with something?

___ ___ Did you understand ALL of your homework problem solutions when they
Yes No were handed in?

___ ___ Did you ask in class for explanations of homework problem solutions that
Yes No weren't clear to you?

Test preparation

___ ___ If you had a study guide, did you carefully go through it before the test and
Yes No convince yourself that you could do everything on it?

___ ___ Did you attempt to outline lots of problem solutions quickly, without
Yes No spending time on the algebra and calculations?

___ ___ Did you go over the study guide and problems with classmates and quiz
Yes No one another?

___ ___ If there was a review session before the test, did you attend it and ask
Yes No questions about anything you weren't sure about?

___ ___ Did you get a reasonable night's sleep before the test? (if your answer is Yes No
NO, then all the other answers may not matter).

___ ___ **TOTAL**

Yes No

The more "Yes" responses you recorded, the better your preparation for the test. If you recorded two or more "No" responses, think seriously about making some changes in how you prepare for the next test.