

GENERAL TEST STUDY PLAN

The more times you can use your brain with material, and the more different ways you can put information through your brain, the more likely you are to have good understanding and easier recognition.

Look over all your quizzes, HW & tests at specifically the questions you got wrong. Try and identify WHY you got them wrong...

- Was it lack of study? If so, why didn't you study that enough/more?
- Was it something tricky in the question, or not reading the question completely?
- Was it timing, or overthinking?

Try to identify patterns here that will help you avoid making those mistakes in the future.

- Re-read to **find or write questions**
- **Practice answering** questions
- Then PRACTICE more **without NOTES**
- **Think** about **specific** concepts/ideas that **confuse you, write Qs**
- **Focus** your attention/time on the **hardest** stuff
- Make **connections** between material
- **Plan** for likely **test questions**
- **Recite** (talk through) what you know
- **Listen** to others' questions, and/or explanations; **rephrase** them!
- Practice **time limits w/ unfamiliar problems**

Backwards Planning for a Big Test

Spend about 1-2 hours per day working on this, so that the time is spread out as much as possible. The days before the test should only be a ramp up to 3hr/day or so, because you'll be a long way towards ready at that point.

- >1 week before = survey all material, identify areas of strength and weakness, practice the easy stuff once, get help re-learning or working through the areas of confusion throughout the material
- 1+ week before = 50% ready; survey everything again, quiz yourself on everything 1-2x, sort which 50% you know ($\sqrt{+}$) and 50% to review/learn more ($\sqrt{-}$ or ?), make connections between topics and work on challenge/problem areas
- 3-4 days before = 75% ready, focus on the hardest/last 25%
- 2 days before = 85-90% ready
- 1 day before = 90-95% ready, focus on the hardest material, take breaks
- Test Day/Due Date = 100% ready, relaxing review if any

EFFECTIVELY MANAGING TIME ON TESTS

- **Have a game plan.** You probably have a sense of what kinds of things will be on the test. Knowing your own strengths and weaknesses, plan to do all the problems that will be easier for you first, and save the more challenging things for later in the exam period. If you know you will need to graph or draw or write, practice doing those things in timed-scenarios-without-notes before the exam to improve fluency.
- Remember that **perfection can be the enemy of progress.** If everything has to be perfect, you may not finish, which sucks. If everything has to be good-enough-for-now, then you may have time to go back and improve on things strategically to make them better.
- If you're **afraid of forgetting** something, jot down a few notes on the front or back page to trigger your memory later. It can boost confidence to note things you can refer back to!
- Take **1-2 minutes to survey** the whole test; look at everything and make some judgements about what will be easier-harder, and what will be quick or be more time-consuming. If there are sections, read the section directions carefully (maybe you only have to do 3 of 5 problems, for example). If there are really high-value questions or parts, take the time now to read the problems carefully so you understand what you will need to do when you tackle those. Look for connections in the questions that might help you remember things or approach problems effectively.
- **Annotate your test as you survey it.** You might circle the easy stuff as you skim, or put stars next to the harder stuff; whatever works for you. That way, when you've looked at the whole thing, you can use these annotations to guide your progress through the test.
- **Plan to start everything,** and get as far as you can on everything, before you get stuck on any particular thing. Leaving a blank is a missed opportunity; starting everything, even if some of it doesn't get finished, means you're more likely to maximize points you can earn.
- Starting with the things you have identified as easier can build confidence and help you make/remember connections that can be useful when tackling the harder parts. If it looked easy but you get stuck, **don't struggle for more than a minute before moving on.** Something else might trigger you to get unstuck, and there are lots more questions on the test waiting for your attention.
- When you get to more complex/harder topics, annotate the question. **What is being asked?** What key words are involved (product, solution, test, process, explain, show, least, greatest, etc)? Are there any tricky words (never, not, alternative, secondary, etc) to watch out for? If you can, break it down into parts and tackle one at a time. **Write down what you know** about a topic. Is there an equation, or some vocabulary, or some reminder notes you can put on paper; these can **help you see how to start.** Alternatively, start working backwards if you can, or **work from more than one direction.** If you get stuck, spend no more than 2 minutes before moving on to something else; you can **come back if you have time.**
- If you have started everything and finished what is easy for you, then you're in really good shape to **use your remaining time strategically.** What do you feel closest to finishing? What will or won't be worth the most? Make your choices here as best you can -- hopefully this is all working out according to your **game plan.**