

How to Prepare for Your Midterm or Final Exam

1. **Gather your materials now!** It is very important to *be organized* before you begin the task of studying for such a huge exam. Find all your notes, handouts, outside readings (if your section has them) study guides, texts and put them in chronological order. *You will waste several hours of valuable time if you do not do this first.*

2. **Divide and conquer!**

**Begin your study today!* Take the amount of units, chapters, sections, outside readings, etc. and divide them by the number of days you have left to prepare for the final up to 2-3 days before the exam. You want to leave some time for general review of all units, or to focus on the areas that still remain the most difficult.

**Plan how much you can study each night, breaking this enormous task into more manageable units of study. Set reasonable goals – it may not be possible to cover an entire unit in one night – you do have other HW and other subjects to prepare for finals.*

**Write down your study plan in your planner and work very hard to stick with it. If you can't, revise your plan to something that works for you.*

3. **Plan how to study!** Learning material in smaller “chunks” will be more effective and far less stressful than cramming a few days before. *Intensive studying, rapid reviewing, identifying important aspects, connecting facts to other eras, testing yourself* are the ways to study. Many students find making notecards to be a very effective way of exam prep, especially for the ID questions. For many, rewriting material helps to learn it. You may need to create some “memory tricks” for certain facts, names, and dates that you want to remember. *The very best students use memory tricks when needed to assist them in recalling information!* Follow your study guide carefully for specific areas you should be concentrating on.

4. **Plan your essays!** If you have been given a list of essays, a few of which may definitely appear on your exam, *don't play the odds and think you will definitely predict which essay(s) will appear – prepare responses for all of them!* This does not mean you have to write out entire essays but you should have a good working outline for each. Even if you have not been given your essays to prepare ahead of time, review the key elements of your notes (major themes/ideas, etc.) and consider the following ideas to help you create possible essay questions, plan essays and form working outlines:

**Understand what the question is asking you by underlining all the aspects of it that must be addressed in your answer. Most essay questions have 2-3 parts to answer. If you are unsure about the wording of the question don't guess- consult with your teacher!*

**Brainstorm ideas!*

**Decide what your main points of your essay will be. These will be your topic sentences of your support paragraphs. Three ideas are a *minimum* number to plan.*

**List details that support your main points.*

*Next *plan your thesis* - your overall idea that ties your essay together. Remember this should be a position that you can defend and prove. Your main points will be the way you prove your thesis idea. See if they do indeed support your thesis.

**Delete repetitive ideas!* Avoid “padding” your essay with lots of words that really do not say much or add to the topic.

*Plan your conclusion ideas – Conclusions generally restate the thesis (using different words!), evaluate ideas, or connect the ideas to something relevant to today. Depending on the nature of your essay you decide what fits best.

5. **Attend extra help/review sessions given by your teacher.** Even if you think you have the information “down cold”, attending some, or all, of the extra review sessions may further clarify information for you. If your current grade is disappointing to you, know that *you must increase your study time to improve* it. Extra help/review sessions can do this for you.
6. **Take some deep breaths!** If you have followed these study suggestions, know that you have absolutely done your best to prepare for your final! Good Luck!!!

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