

Alumni Blog - December 2021

Strategies to Survive Finals Week

Slowly back away from the coffee and energy drinks. I do understand that it is finals week; however, an espresso drip and a planned all-nighter is not the way you will crush this week. These "typical" survival techniques actually backfire. Caffeine is just a short-term solution and all-nighters make your memory worse.

Finals week can strike fear into the hearts of most students but instead of panicking, there are proven strategies that will help you study and retain your mentally, emotional and physical health.

Finals week is no joke. It doesn't matter if you are a freshman finishing up your first semester or a senior who is ready to graduate already. These exam weeks can be overwhelming and scary.

Prepare for your exams with these study tips.

Create your own study guide. While many professors provide a study guide, creating your own can help you understand the material better. Outlining the important information, you need to learn can be helpful. It gives you a refresher while you create the study guide!

Ask questions. Your professors are there to help. I know that this is a recurring theme in these blogs but asking your teacher's questions about the material is the best way to make sure you understand the material and are prepared for the exam.

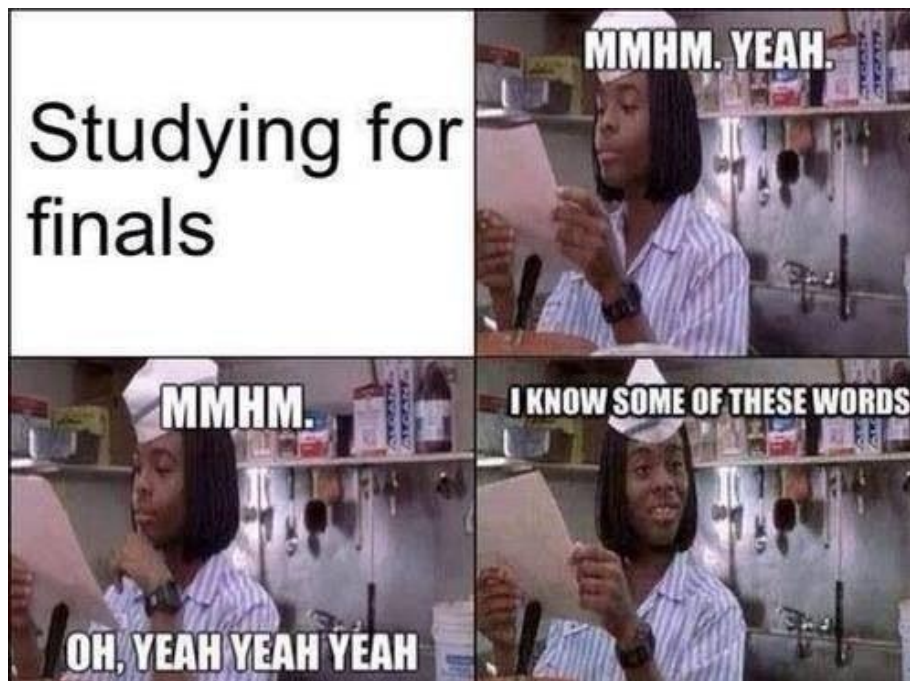
Attend the review session. Whether it is in-person or virtually, if your professor offers a review day, you will want to make every effort to attend. They will offer vital information about the exam format, important topics, and key concepts you should be focusing on.

Start early. Know your final exam schedule. Study ahead and don't cram the night before. You will almost always perform better this way.

Clear your space of distractions. If you get distracted easily make sure to place yourself in an environment that prevents that from happening. Silence your phone, put it on 'do not disturb' mode, or just put it away. Resist the urge to browse websites not related to your course material. Download your resources ahead of time (maybe even think of turning off your internet when you're ready to begin to help keep you focused.

Organize a study group. It can be helpful to study in groups- sometimes. Evaluate whether or not that is your learning style and if it will truly help you. If so, this may be a vital way for you to learn the material.

Study what is not on the study guide. It's annoying but study guides aren't always comprehensive- they're just suggestions of the main concepts to learn. Use your study guide for its intended purpose: a guide. Be sure to fill in the blanks with related information.



Find the right space. Studying in your room may sometimes be a bad idea. That is the place you normally go to relax and stream entertainment. Go to a different location, one that won't be distracting, like the lobby of your dorm, the library, or some quiet coffee place. Don't be afraid to venture out and try studying at a new location. Sometimes change in scenery can help revamp your focus.

Take breaks. You won't be able to memorize or comprehend all the material at once (shocker I know). Balance is key- ensuring that you reward your hard earned learning with study break times to recharge and relax.

Eat right. Even though there isn't a magic food source that will help you ace all of these finals, it is important to fuel your body with high protein food rather than relying on that cup of coffee to give you the energy you need. Consider these following protein snacks this week: Greek yogurt with nuts or seeds, cheese and crackers, rice cakes and nut butter, hard-boiled egg and popcorn, apples and peanut butter, hummus and veggies (bell peppers, cucumbers, carrots), cottage cheese and fruit, and trail mix.

Stay well rested. There is a lot to be said about a good night's sleep. Make sure you get in some hours of sleep so that you can be fully focused during your exam.

Prioritize your study time. Some exams will be more difficult than others, while others will be easier. Some may even be worth more of your grade than others. Make sure to evaluate all of your exams to consider all of the factors so you can study accordingly.

Study for the style of exam. An effective study technique is to practice the exam as it will be delivered. If it's multiple choice, you will need to know definitions and concepts. For essay exams, focus on your understanding of all the concepts presented, with examples in mind.

Get outside. Go get some fresh air! Outside time can be good for your mental health. Physical activity helps reduce stress and something as simple as a 10-minute walk between study sessions can clear your mind.



Quiz yourself. Coming up with potential questions and quizzing yourself will help set expectations of what you need to focus on. Flash cards would be a great way to familiarize yourself with the type of language that may show up on the exam.

Reorganize your notes. Evaluate and reorganize your notes into what's important, outlining important concepts, formulas dates and definitions so they're easy to understand.

Pace yourself. Make sure to stay focused and don't burn yourself out. Pace yourself by taking short study periods. Trying to remember a million things at once can be a lot to take on. Take a break, reset, and study some more later on.

Switch it up. Switching up your subjects is a helpful way to learn everything for your exams while preventing burnout on one topic. Make sure to switch it up before your eyes glaze over. That way, you can keep studying for longer periods of time while maintaining your focus.

Color code it. Create a system that allows you to color code material that's going to be on the exam by what's most important, less important, etc. This will help you focus on the most critical information and prioritize the material.

Visualize. If you're a visual learner, it can help to create mind maps or diagrams to visualize how the concepts you're learning relate to one another. This is especially beneficial when learning concepts that build upon the understanding of one another, like in science courses.

Take a break between exams. Once you turn in your exam, you might feel tempted to jump right into the deep waters of studying for the next exam. But take a moment for yourself if you can. After the adrenaline rush of a final exam, reset your brain before the next test. Go for a walk, take a nap or enjoy the day.

These strategies may not be as fun or quick as a caffeine rush but remember that you need to pace yourself. Fuel yourself to survive the marathon of finals week.