



The Facts of Life

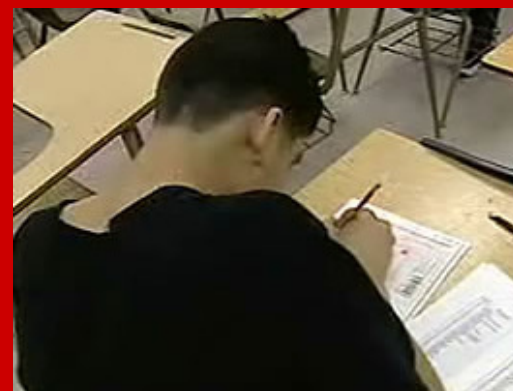
Tips to Tame the Finals Beast

From the University of California Riverside Honors Program

Think about it. One week can determine up to 40% of your final grade in every class. Finals week is where you will either SINK or SWIM. The question is, do you know how to guarantee that both you and your GPA will "float through" finals successfully?

Check out the following suggestions and put them to work for you.

1. **Start early.** Preparation for finals begins even BEFORE the actual week of final exams. You cannot cram an entire quarter or semester's worth of information into one or two nights of studying. Get started on Monday the week before final exams. Think of finals week as finals weeks.
2. **Sleep.** You need at least four hours of sleep a night to function. College finals are designed to make you think. If you are sleep deprived, you won't be able to comprehend (or answer) the challenging questions you will face.
3. **Determine what type of final you will be taking.** A non-comprehensive final will cover all the information given/discussed after the last mid-term exam. There are also comprehensive finals. Comprehensive finals cover all of the information covered from day one of the class. Determining which type of final you will be taking could make a huge difference in the time you'll need to commit to studying for a particular final.
4. **Focus on your notes.** If you are 23 chapters behind in your reading for a class, don't spend the night before the final trying to read the material for the first time. Unless the professor has clearly stated that the book covers different content than the lecture and that it will be covered on the test, you're better off focusing on your notes (assuming you have been to class).
5. **Hide.** Study in an out-of-the-way place. As tempted as you are to study with your friends, you're best bet is to find a place of your own where you can think. Avoid the mass hysteria at the student union and flee from people wanting to borrow your notes.
6. **Don't chase an old test.** Don't spend the entire night before trying to run down a copy of last year's exam. Even if you do find one, you'll most likely be very disappointed to find that it bears little resemblance to this year's test.
7. **Stop cramming five minutes before the test.** Use this time before the test to relax, catch your breath, and take a minute to get focused. By cramming until the last 30 seconds before you sit down to take the exam, you will more than likely just confuse yourself or walk into a wall trying to read and get to your desk.
8. **Read all of the directions carefully.** Read through the entire test to see what you are up against. Determine if you will have any time pressure and if it is manageable. Determine where the easy points are. Answer those questions first if you think you may be short on time. This will leave the most time to focus on the harder portions of the exam. If different sections of the exam are weighted



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differently on the point scale, do not waste all of your time on the 2 point questions when there are heavier-weighted 10 point questions to tackle.

9. Stay calm during the exam. If at first glance, the test is overwhelming, remember to breathe! Do not panic. If you don't know the answer to a question, move on to the next question and come back later. Remind yourself that you are well prepared, and take the exam one question at a time. You will gain momentum by answering the easy questions first—and you will do better by keeping your head in the game.

10. Ask questions if allowed. You may find that you gain a great deal of clarity about what the professor is truly getting at with the question. You might even get a feel for the answer the professor is looking for if you listen closely.

11. Stay for the entire session. Reread the questions and your answers to them. Make sure you understand what the question is really asking and that you have answered the question completely and accurately

12. Remain calm after the exam. Even if you think you did horribly, worrying about it afterwards will not change a thing; it may however, effect how you do on your other finals. Keep your head up and move on to the next exam. Odds are that if you were well prepared for this exam and you did poorly that others also did poorly. If your received a 48% and the professor decided to curve the final, your score could still be a passing grade. Study your favorite subject last and the one you dread first.

Dealing with Test Anxiety

A hundred cartloads of anxiety will not pay an ounce of debt. *-Italian proverb*

Before the test:

- Be prepared!
- Learn your material thoroughly.
- A program of exercise is said to sharpen the mind.
- Get a good night's sleep the night before the exam.
- Approach the exam with confidence: View the exam as an opportunity to show how much you've studied and to receive a reward for the studying you've done.
- Don't go to the exam with an empty stomach.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are often recommended to reduce stress. Stressful foods can include processed foods, artificial sweeteners, carbonated soft drinks, chocolate, eggs, fried foods, junk foods, pork, red meat, sugar, white flour products, chips and similar snack foods, foods containing preservatives or heavy spices.
- Take a small snack, or some other nourishment to help take your mind off of your anxiety. Avoid high sugar content (candy), which may aggravate your condition.
- Allow yourself plenty of time, especially to do things you need to do before the test and still get there a little early.
- Relax just before the exam.
- Don't try to do a last minute review.

During the test:

- Read the directions carefully.
- Budget your test taking time.
- Change positions to help you relax.
- If you go blank, skip the question and go on.
- If you're taking an essay test and you go blank on the whole test, pick a question and start writing. It may trigger the answer in your mind.
- Don't panic when students start handing in their papers. There's no reward for being the first done.

OFA acknowledges the following website as the source of this article:

www.honors.ucr.edu/finals.htm