

Lesson #40: Final Exam Prep 3 – Study Tips

Directions: Read the article from kidshealth.org/en/teens/test-terror.html

Don't panic. There are many ways to study well. These tips can help you [take tests](#) with confidence.

1. Start Studying in School

Studying for tests and quizzes starts well before you even know you'll have a test. **Good study techniques begin in the classroom as you [take notes](#).**

It can take time to learn the best note-taking strategies for you. You may find you only need to write or type short phrases that will help you remember what your teacher said, or you may be someone who prefers to write down as much as possible. Some people like using a graphic organizer to take notes. These notebooks have pages with boxes or other shapes to write in that help you structure something like an essay. Try different ways to take notes to help you decide what works best for you.

Keep your notes organized by subject and make sure they're easy to read and review. This may mean that you need to copy some notes at home or during a free period while the information is still fresh in your mind, but doing so will help you remember the material better.

2. Plan Your Study Time

When you sit down to study, think about how much time you want to devote to each topic. This will keep you from getting overwhelmed. If it's Monday, and you've got three tests on Friday, figure out how much time you need for each subject between now and then. Plan to do a little each day.

Try breaking large topics down into chunks. Let's say you have a history test on World War II. Instead of thinking about studying all of World War II (which could overwhelm even an expert), try breaking your study sessions into 2-year chunks or studying the material by specific battles.

Plan the length of your study sessions thoughtfully. If you plan to study for a long time, make sure you take breaks. Be sure that your study time does not interfere with your sleeping schedule. When you find yourself getting distracted, that's a good time to take a quick break.

3. Study Based on the Type of Test You're Taking

Many teachers tell students ahead of time what the format of an exam will be. This can help tailor how you study. For example, multiple-choice questions might focus on facts and details, and essay questions usually require a more thoughtful understanding of the material and the ability to write a response.

When trying to memorize dates, names, or other facts, remember that it usually takes several tries to remember something. So start studying early. Flashcards can help with memorization. Some people use the "SAFMEDS" approach, which stands for "say all fast, for a minute every day and shuffled." Verbal memory cues, also known as "mnemonic devices," can also help you memorize information.

Do some practice problems. Take note of any practice problems you're struggling with and ask a teacher or tutor for help to understand them better.

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4. Keep Procrastination to a Minimum

Some people actually work better under pressure, so they often wait until the last minute to start their tasks. But this doesn't work so well for studying. You need time to digest information, but maybe you end up procrastinating simply because you don't know how to get started.

If you procrastinate, try to overcome it by staying organized. After you've written test and project due dates on a calendar or saved them on your phone, it's hard to ignore them. These reminders can help you plan ahead so you can stay on top of your tasks.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, don't be afraid to ask teachers, guidance counselors, parents, or other adults for help. Adults respect students who are thoughtful and self-aware.

5. Join a Study Group (or Start Your Own)

When you study with classmates, you can double-check your notes, come up with ways to remember the information, and test one another. You'll also hear different people explain the same concepts and explain the concepts yourself, both of which can deepen your understanding.

Try going to a library if you can. The environment may make your group more likely to stay on topic and not get distracted. You can also start a group text to ask each other questions if you don't have space to meet in person.

6. Study in the Right Frame of Mind

When you sit down to study, how are you feeling? Are you dwelling on something that happened earlier, or anxious about other things you have to do? If you're distracted or otherwise not in a good mood, you'll have trouble focusing.

Take a moment to check in with yourself before studying. If necessary, you can try strategies to [improve your mood](#), such as [breathing exercises](#) or [meditation](#). These can help you feel calm and confident, getting you into the right frame of mind to study. Think you don't have time? Just pausing for a minute to take a couple of deep breaths can help you clear your mind and focus better.

The Payoff

When you've studied well, you'll feel like you can approach the test or quiz with confidence.

Don't worry if you can't remember something the night before the test. Your brain needs time to absorb information. It's more important to get a good night's sleep, eat well, and prepare yourself mentally.

Finally, resist the urge to cram just before the test. Use this time to relax and clear your mind, so you save your mental energy for the test. If you've studied, you can trust that you'll remember what you need to know.

Lesson #41: Final Exam Prep 4 — Test-Taking Tips

Directions: Read the article from kidshealth.org/en/teens/testing-tips.html



Test-Taking Tips

Do you sweat, chew your pencil, and feel butterflies in your stomach as your teacher hands out a test? A lot of people (adults included) get freaked out when it's time to take a test.

It's natural to feel some stress about taking tests. In fact, sometimes a little adrenaline (a hormone made by your body during times of excitement or stress) is a good thing to jump-start you.

How Can I Get Better at Taking Tests?

Here are some tips for taking tests:

- **Go into the test with confidence.** In other words, make sure you've done enough studying to feel confident that you know the material. Staying confident makes it easier to remember everything you need to know.
- **Get enough sleep the night before the test.** Your memory recall will be much better if you've had enough sleep. A scientific study showed that people who got enough sleep before taking a math test did better than those who stayed up all night studying.
- **Put away all your study materials before the test.** Many students will still be frantically reviewing the material 10 minutes before the test gets handed out, but this won't help you do any better. It's more important for you to clear your mind and relax during this time, so you'll save your mental energy for the actual test.
- **Listen closely to any instructions.** As the teacher hands out the test, be sure you know what's expected of you.
- **Read through the test first.** When you have the test in front of you, go through it to see how long it is. This will let you estimate how much time you have for each section and ask the teacher any questions. If something seems unclear before you start, don't panic: ask.
- **Answer the questions in any order.** As you take the test, if you don't know an answer try not to get stuck on it. Instead, answer the best way you can, or skip over the question and come back to it later. You may find it easier to answer a question you've skipped after you've answered other questions.

Lesson #41: Final Exam Prep 4 — Test-Taking Tips (cont)

- **Relax.** If you're so nervous that you blank out, you might need a mini-break. You can wiggle your fingers and toes, take 4 or 5 deep breaths, or picture yourself on a beach or some other calm place. You can even stretch a little at your desk (but try to avoid distracting the other students).
- **Running out of time?** It's OK if you don't finish every question on the test. Do your best to answer the questions you can, and keep an eye on the clock so you know how much time is left for any remaining questions you still need to answer. You can always guess if you're stuck on some of the questions and time is running out.
- **Finished already?** Although most teachers will let you hand a test in early, it's usually a good idea to spend any extra time checking your work. Take a minute to breathe deeply and clear your mind before reviewing your answers. You may end up adding more details to some of your answers that you didn't think you'd have time for.

These tips should help most people, but some can get serious test-taking stress. If you're one of them, you may need to talk to a parent, teacher, or counselor for help.

Relaxation Exercises: Breathing Basics

Slow, calm, deep breathing can help us relax, manage stress, relieve anxiety and depression, and get a good night's sleep, among many other things. Breathing also helps quiet the mind in preparation for meditation.

So how do you use breathing as a way to unwind and relax? Let our recordings guide you and help you get started.

Watch the 4 videos with different breathing techniques.

kidshealth.org/en/teens/relax-breathing.html

