SuccESS Strategies

Getting Serious about Finals

Final exams can be a stressful time for CWRU students. With break on the way and GPAs hanging in the balance, thinking about finals can be enough to send you into a panic.

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure.” ~ Colin Powell

Make It Easy on Yourself!

Start by writing down what you have to complete for each course. Write your plans in pencil on your planner or calendar. ESS offers a special finals calendar along with other helpful hints on study strategies.

Once you plot out how you will approach your studying, you won’t worry about whether you’ll finish all your work. Working out a schedule will also force you to make some decisions about how to maximize your time.

Get Out of Your Room

As comfortable as it may be to study in your room, you will accomplish more if you find a place that is just for studying. In the residence hall, people procrastinate and procrastinators love company. They will end up in your room! Alternate where you study: a library, the hospital atrium, or an empty classroom. Plan 50-minute blocks with 10-minute breaks. When your concentration flags, do something to refocus.

Be Active

If you are preparing for a problem-solving test, then solve problems—lots of them. Be sure that much of your practice imitates the exact exam environment. In other words, if you cannot have any aids while taking the exam, do at least one practice exam without using the text, notes, or help from a tutor or friend. If you are preparing for a multiple-choice or essay exam, create summary sheets of your notes. The act of synthesizing the information into a written format will help you learn the material.

Find a Study Partner

Studying for finals is a lonely process. Find a good student, better still a good student who is preparing for some of your same finals. You and your study partner can plan where and when you’ll study. It’s easier to get up in the morning to study if you know that you are expected to meet your study partner at an arranged time.

Go See Your Professors

This advice is especially important if you aren’t sure what your finals cover or what is expected on a project or paper. Finding out this information will allow you to focus on what’s really important learning the material rather than worrying about what you don’t understand.

Talk it Out

ESS staff members are available during finals week to help you. Call 368-5230 to arrange an appointment to see an ESS professional. We will listen to your concerns and help you design your best approach to handling your test preparation.

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Preparation for Finals

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“To guarantee success, act as if it were impossible to fail.” ~ Dorothea Brande

Organizational Tips

- Make a list of what needs to be completed and studied for each course. Writing down what you have to do gives you a sense of control. Also, you may be surprised to discover that it’s not as bad as you think.

- Determine your current grade for each course. Using this information, you can decide how to allocate your time and whether you need to take an elective course as Pass/No Pass. Check with your professor before you make any major decisions regarding a course.

- See your professor if you have questions about any end-of-the-semester projects or the final.

- Get an ESS Finals Calendar, which is available the last few weeks of each semester in Sears 470. Use this calendar to write down what you need to accomplish each day.

- Divide your study days into three segments: morning, afternoon, and evening. Jot down goals for each segment. Use the lists that you made for each course to plan your time.

- Talk with Resident Assistant or Commuter Assistant if you are feeling stressed out about your finals. These peer mentors will have some practical suggestions for handling test anxiety. Also you may want to talk with a staff member from ESS, University Counseling, or your advisor.

- Attend the last week of classes. Your professor may offer some last-minute tips on how to prepare for the final.

Study Tips

- Use old practice exams to begin your preparation. Take one as a pretest to help you decide what you do and don’t know. Use a second exam towards the end of your preparation to check your progress. Take this second exam under the same conditions that you expect for the final.

- Create review sheets that summarize key points and formulas. This activity will help you to sort out and organize course content in a format that makes sense to YOU.

- Keep in touch with your professor or teaching assistant through email in case you have any last-minute questions.

- Create a study group. Study groups can create review sheets and help group members stay on schedule.

- Attend review sessions scheduled by your professor, teaching assistant, SI Leader, or Commuter Assistant.

- Ask your professors how you may pick up your graded final. A review of your graded final will help prepare you for your next set of finals.