



## Exam bootcamp. Getting ready for the final push.

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This checklist contains all of the most important things you will need to do and have in place before, during and after exams, as well as how to approach different types of exams (e.g., multiple choice, short answer, essay and take-home exams). Here's we go:



### **1. Find out as much as you can about your exams.**

Ask your profs and other students what they are doing to prepare for the exam. Find out how many questions, what kind of questions and what the exam will focus on. This is a fact-finding mission. The more information you have about the exam, the better you can prepare. Any amount of information from the professor or TA will be helpful. Ask if there are practice exams or exams from last year to prepare with.



### **2. Gather everything that you need to know.**

The next step is to gather all of the material that you will be responsible for on all of your exams. This can include lectures, readings, handouts, etc. This all needs to be in one place. It is easier to prepare once you have everything in one place. This also cuts down the worry about whether or not you have missed something.



### **3. Fill in your knowledge gaps.**

Read through and review what you have to know. Identify anything that you don't know or are not clear about. If you think it will be on the exam, then you need to talk to the professor or teaching assistant and get those questions answered.



### **4. Build a team.**

At this point, even if you are not already feeling overwhelmed, it can be helpful to find someone else to prepare the exam with. This can be anyone who can help you stay on track and get to the library, answer questions that come up, or remind you that you are going to make it. If you do not yet have a study partner, then ask the three closest people in class if they want to study together. All you have to do is say, "I am looking for someone to prepare the exam with. Go over things that are not clear, and so on. Here's my cell number. Text me if you are interested." If you do this with three people, one of them will say yes.



**5. Find out where and when the exam is.**

This might seem kind of silly, but a surprising number of students get the wrong room, the wrong building, the wrong time or the wrong day. It is a terrible situation that can easily be avoided.



**6. Make a storyboard and a timeline.**

The storyboard and timeline are designed to help you put in the time you need to prepare and stick to that plan. Saying you are going to study all day isn't realistic, and it isn't a plan. Finding three blocks of time each day, each of which is just 2 hours (and includes a 10-minute break), is a plan that can reduce your stress and improve your performance. There are a few elements to making a storyboard and a timeline.

**Step 1.** Print off a weekly storyboard for each week from now until the day of your final exam. These need to go on your wall so that you can see everything that you need to get done from now until your final exam. Write down all of your deadlines (i.e., exams and papers).

**Step 2.** Try to find three blocks of time, each lasting 2 hours. You need to have at least an hour between each block in which you do something else (e.g., eat lunch, go for a run, change study locations).

**Step 3.** Fill each block with what exam you are going to prepare for (e.g., biology, psychology). Try to do at least three different topics each day. (The research says you are more efficient if you spend 6 hours on something over three days, i.e., 2 hours per day, than 6 hours in a single day).

**Step 4.** Write down the activity in each block of time (e.g., make flashcards, review flashcards, do practice problems, review the topic that you still don't understand, go talk to the teaching assistant or professor) as well as the location and time (e.g., the library at 9 am).



**7. Reward yourself at the end of the day.**

As the semester comes to an end and final exams begin, you are going to have to stay motivated. That means having something to look forward to at the end of the day, end of the week and at the very end of it all. There are lots of things you can do to motivate yourself. The key idea is that you push through the work and save those rewards for the very end (but not at the expense of your precious eight hours of sleep).



**8. Work your plan and count down the days.**

Bootcamp is about working your plan each day, every day, until you are done. In most cases, that means the last two weeks of the semester, plus another couple of weeks during exams. That's about 30 days. Counting down the days (i.e., cross them off your storyboard) will help you get through.

Thirty days of pain. One day at a time. That's boot camp.