PLANNING

1. Complete your Finals Plan, showing all upcoming assignments and tests in each course.
2. Evaluate your probable and possible grades. Which courses have solid grades? Which are borderline? You have limited time, so decide where to invest it to get the best results.
3. If necessary, go to each professor to determine your status in the course. Take your text and notes and ask for specific suggestions on study and review techniques.
4. For each task on your Finals Plan, generously estimate the amount of time you'll need. On your calendar, indicate the days and the number of hours each day that you will work on each task (ex. Monday: 2 hrs. - read Psyc.; 1 hr. - type English paper).
5. On a weekly schedule sheet for this week, plan specific times to complete 1/3 to 1/2 of the tasks on your Finals Plan.

CLASSES

1. Go to every class! More material may be covered now than earlier in the semester. Be alert for information about final assignments and exams.
2. Try for complete, accurate notes. Record as many main ideas as possible. Listen for summaries at the beginning and end.
3. After each class, compare your notes with classmates' notes. Add to yours to improve clarity and completeness. Within 24 hours, review your notes with a pen or highlighter, marking ideas that were stressed -- these may be test questions!

STUDY

1. Study some every day, including weekends. If you go away for the weekend, leave campus late or return early; don't lose "prime time."
2. Provide yourself with a good study environment. Ideally, use the library. If you study in your room, clean up both room and desk. Unplug the TV. Don't answer the door or phone when you're studying. Turn off your phone, then return calls/texts later when you take a break.
3. Study during the day or early evening, then reward yourself with time off. Choose carefully. A movie leaves you fit for classes and study the next day; late night partying does not.
4. If you have many textbook chapters to read, divide the task into five or six parts, using your calendar or weekly schedule form. Then do one part per day, crossing off completed tasks on your Finals Plan.
5. For each hour of reading you plan, schedule a 10-15 minute break. Get up, stretch, move around. Read aloud or switch from one course to another if concentration lags.
6. To reduce stress, try to finish projects or papers before their due dates.

YOU

1. Celebrate in moderation! Treat yourself to dinner and a watch a show rather than going out.
2. Laundry and cleaning are good, active breaks from studying.
3. Daily, try for a half hour of exercise, two balanced meals, and eight hours of sleep.

PLANNING

1. List times of all finals on your calendar or weekly schedule form. If you have three on one day, check to see if one professor has two sections of the course. Ask to take the test earlier, with the other section.
2. Buy all necessary study supplies: paper, index cards, pens, pencils, highlighters, etc. Stock up on healthy, energy-producing snacks.
3. For unfinished assignments, follow these steps:
   a. Ask: What needs to be done? How much time will it take? When will I do it? Answer on your Finals Plan.
   b. If you have more work than time, set priorities. Start with the most important task or the one that's due first. Number each task 1, 2, 3...
   c. Record each task on your calendar or weekly schedule, on the day you will do it, showing time needed (ex. 2 hrs - read History).

CLASSES

1. Read ahead so you go to each class PREPARED. You'll know what concepts the lecture will cover, what's hard, what questions to ask, and what's covered thoroughly in the text. You'll comprehend more and take better, more useful notes.
2. Listen carefully for summaries and overall reviews at the beginning and end. Expect more information than earlier in the semester. Record as many main ideas and supporting details as possible.
3. After class, compare notes with others' to be sure yours are complete. Within 24 hours, review and rework notes with a pen or highlighter. Fill in blanks, mark ideas stressed by the professor -- they're possible test questions!

STUDY

1. Begin to study EARLY in the day; temptations to avoid studying are strong now. Talk yourself into studying before you do other tasks.
2. Read text assignments quickly, underlining or highlighting after each paragraph or page. Sleepy? Divide reading into 15 to 30 minute chunks; exercise or shower to wake up.
3. For each course, list what you expect to see on the exam. What has the professor emphasized? Will it be like earlier tests? Will it be a full three hours long?
4. WHERE you study is as important as how much! To do your best, use the library. In the daytime, it's quiet and you're not tired. Evenings are better used as break time. Try earplugs if noise distracts you; if they help, you can even use them during an exam.

YOU

1. You are the star performer during finals, so pace yourself. Keep to a routine, including exercise, rest, food, and sleep. Don't experiment with new forms of caffeine or "foolproof" stay-awake schemes. They could spell academic disaster.
2. Finals are an emotional period; roommate arguments and broken romances are common. Try to keep relationships on an even keel, delaying any confrontations until after finals.

Make Your Plan - Finals Planning Sheet

Step 1: Take an honest look at your courses, your grades going into finals, and their relative importance to you. On the Finals Plan form, RANK YOUR COURSES in order of priority or difficulty, decide on the GRADE you can aim to achieve in each, determine the TYPE OF TEST in each course, and plan STUDY METHODS for each.

Step 2: Next, use the Finals Plan form to LIST THE WORK remaining in each course and to ESTIMATE THE TIME NEEDED for each task. You may feel that you could spend months on each course, but time is limited and YOU MUST MAKE CHOICES to spend your time effectively. If one grade will stay a C no matter what you score on the final, but another grade could go from B to A, put more time into the course you can influence. Any course which you are in danger of failing should go at the top.

Step 3: Now translate your WORK LIST and TIME ESTIMATES into a CALENDAR for the time remaining. Enter all tests and paper due dates, then plan to begin review for each exam well in advance. Brief review periods each day for several days produce better memory and less stress. You have more time left than you realize: a week contains 168 hours. From that, subtract 56 hours for 8 hours of sleep daily, 15 hours for classes, 11 hours for 3 half-hour meals daily, 3 hours for exercise, and you still have 83 HOURS OF POSSIBLE STUDY TIME EACH WEEK! With planning & discipline, you can accomplish a great deal.

Step 4: Then use the attached weekly schedule to plan a FINALS WEEK SCHEDULE. Enter the times of your finals, then fit in the tasks on your Finals Plan. To be at your best during exams, plan time for adequate SLEEP, FOOD, and EXERCISE during this critical period. You'll do better on an exam after a good night's sleep (at least 4 hours but preferably 8), and a protein meal to fuel both brain and body. 20-30 minutes of any aerobic exercise daily can help to reduce stress and improve concentration.

FINALS PLANNING

Course	Goal	Expected Test	Study Strategies	Work to be Done	Time
PSYC	A or B+	Multiple choice Very detailed Literal and Applied Questions Cumulative Worth 15%	Make summary sheets for text and lecture notes Make flash cards for important terms and facts Recite out loud to memorize	Read chap. 14 (22 pp.) &make summary sheets Read chap. 15 (18 pp.) and make summary sheets Make flash cards for chaps. 14 & 15 Review chaps. 1,2,5,7,8,10,12 with recitation Review lecture notes with recitation Review all flash cards	2 hrs. 2 hrs. 2 hrs. 7 hrs. 6 hrs. 4 hrs. 23 hrs.
ACCT	B	Problem solving Cumulative Worth 25%	Work all problemsmissed on tests, quizzes, homework Work hard problems in text that were not assigned	Do last homework assign ments (problem set 8) Rework key problems (especially hard ones from tests and textbook) Work with Acct. tutors to clarify anything confusing	3 hrs. 6 hrs. 4 hrs. 13 hrs.
BIOL	B or B-	Multiple Choice General concepts & terms Cumulative Worth 20%	Highlight rest of book, mak-ing marginal notes Review with some recitation (not as much as for Psyc)	Read and highlight Chapter 6 Review highlighted parts of previous chapers, with some recitation Review lecture notes with recitation Attend A-LEC review session	1 1/2 hrs. 4 hrs. 4 hrs. 2 hrs. 11 1/2 hrs.
ENGL	B+	Essays Memory of plots, characters Critical Evaluations Cumulative Worth 40%	Make charts to condense char, settings, plot or each novel, story, etc. Try to predict likely essay questions Outline key points Review charts and out-lines	Read last 3 short stories 5 page paper: research and take notes outline & draft revise Writing Center Make charts, predict ?s, and outline answers Review charts and outlines to memorize	3 hrs. 1 hr. 2 hrs. 4 hrs. 1/2 hr. 3 hrs. 4 hrs. 17 1/2 hrs.

EXAMPLE

FINALS PLANNING

front & back!

Semester_____
Year_____

Be sure to plan for completing all remaining work, too! Even if your class doesn't have a final exam or assessment, list out everything else left you still need to complete for the course.

Goal GPA:

Course & Goal Grade	Details About Expected Assessment	Study Strategies & Tools	Work to be Done	Time Needed

SMU Academic Skill Development

FINALS PLANNING

front & back!

Semester_____
Year_____

Be sure to plan for completing all remaining work, too! Even if your class doesn't have a final exam or assessment, list out everything else left you still need to complete for the course.

Goal GPA:

Course & Goal Grade	Details About Expected Assessment	Study Strategies & Tools	Work to be Done	Time Needed

SMU Academic Skill Development

FOUR WEEKS TO FINALS

Once you've completed all the detailed planning of what you need to do, it's time to plan the "when." Translate your work list and time estimates into a calendar for the time remaining in the semester. Use the "Four Weeks to Finals" sheet on the next page, an example is provided below. Enter all tests & paper due dates, then plan to begin reviewing for each exam in advance. Short review periods each day for many days produce better memory and less stress.

You have more time left than you realize: a week contains 168 hours. From that subtract 56 hours for 8 hours of sleep daily, 15 hours for classes, 11 hours for 3 half-hour meals daily, 3 hours of exercise, and you still have 83 hours of possible study time each week. With planning and discipline, you can accomplish a great deal.

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	13	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**
NOV		Schedule Writing Center appt.	1 hr - Read ch.14 PSYC & summarize 1 hr - research, take notes for ENGL paper	1 hr - outline ENGL paper 1 hr - finish PSYC ch.14 & summarize	1/2 hr. WritingCenter appt. 2 hrs- BIOL	3 hrs - start draft of ENGL paper	3 hrs - ACCT problems Set 8
	20	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24 - Thanksgiving**	**25**	**26**
	1 hr - Make flash cards for PSYCH ch.14	1 hr - Read PSYC ch.15 & summarize 1 hr. ACCT. tutor	1 hr -finish PSYC ch.15 & summarize 2 hrs ACCT tutor	2 hrs - finish draft of ENGL paper 1 hr - make flash cards - PSYC ch.15		1 hr - Rvw PSYC ch.1	2 hr - revise & edit ENGL paper 1 hr - hard ACCT problems
	27	**28**	**29**	**30**	**1**	**2**	**3**
NOV & DEC	1 hr - Rvw PSYC ch.2 1 hr - Rvw PSYC ch.5 1 hr – revise & print ENGL paper	**ENGL paper due** 1 hr - Read BIOL ch.6 1 hr - Review PSYC ch.7	1 hr - Review PSYC ch.8 1 hr - Read ENGL	1 hr - Read ENGL 1 hr - ACCT tutor 1 hr - Review hard ACCT problems	**ACCT project due** 1hr - Review PSYC ch.10 2 hrs - Review PSYC ch.12	2 hrs - Review PSYC notes 2 hrs – ACCT problems	1hr - Read ENGL 2hrs - Review PSYC lecture notes
	4	**5 – Last Class Day**	**6 – Reading Day**	**7 – Reading Day**	**8 - FINALS**	**9 - FINALS**	**10- FINALS**
FINALS	1hr – Make ENGL outlines & charts 1hrs - LEC BIOL rvw session	3 hrs - Review PSYC flash cards 2 hrs - Make ENGL outlines & charts	2 hrs - Review ENGL charts & outlines 2 hr - Review BIOL text	2 hrs - Review ENGL charts & outlines 1 hr - ACCT probs	2 hrs - Review BIOL lecture notes 2 hr - Review PSYC Notes	2 hrs – rvw ACCT notes 2 hrs - ACCT probs	**11:30-2:30 ACCT FNL** 1 hr – ACCT problems 2 hrs - review BIOL notes
	11 - FINALS	**12 - FINALS**	**13 - FINALS**	**14 - FINALS**	**15**	**16**	**17**
	2 hrs - Review BIOL text	**8-11 BIO FNL** 2 hrs - Review PSYC lecture notes 2 hr - Review PSYC flash cards	**11:30-2:30 PSYC FNL** 2 hrs - Review PSYC flash cards 2 hrs- ENGL study	**3-6 ENGL FNL** 4 hrs- ENGL study			

EXAMPLE

FOUR WEEKS TO FINALS EXAMPLE

***Note- this example is from a previous semester!**

Goal GPA:

FOUR WEEKS TO FINALS

Semester: Fall

Year: 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
November 15	Nov 16	Nov 17	Nov 18	Nov 19	Nov 20	Nov 21
Nov 22	Nov 23	Nov 24-last day to drop	Nov 25	Nov 26-Thanksgiving	Nov 27	Nov 28
Nov 29	Nov 30	December 1	Dec 2	Dec 3	Dec 4	Dec 5
Dec 6	Dec 7	Dec 8- Last Class Day	Dec 9- Reading Day	Dec 10- Finals	Dec 11- Finals	Dec 12- Finals
Dec 13	Dec 14- Finals	Dec 15- Finals	Dec 16- Finals	Dec 17	Dec 18	Dec 19

Celebrate & Relax!

SMU Academic Skill Development

PLANNING

1. Double check the date, time, and place of each final; record on your calendar.
2. Before you leave your room/home to take a final, be sure you have: a watch to pace yourself during the test; notes to review briefly on the way; paper, pencils, and pens; a calculator if needed. To boost energy and concentration, take a snack to eat halfway through a long exam.
3. Plan to arrive 10 minutes early for a last review. Avoid talking to panicky classmates; sit up front to block your view of others, and they won't distract you.

CLASS- THE FINAL EXAM

1. Don't panic when the test is handed out. Read directions carefully. Breathe deeply and pretend you are alone in the room. Do a "memory dump," writing names, dates, formulas, etc. on the test.
2. Preview the test for organization and point distribution. Plan your time: a part worth 50% gets 50% of the time. Jot down start and stop times for each section. Use a watch to stick to your schedule.
3. Answer EASIER questions FIRST, then return to harder ones. Read each question carefully; accept it at face value. Don't read things into the question that aren't there. Focus on one question at a time. Underline or circle key words in the question and in answer choices to help concentrate.
4. Lapses of memory are normal & temporary. Don't let yourself panic. Relax, move on, then return.
5. For essays, print or write on every other line to improve legibility and to leave space for corrections and additions. To clarify organization, state your thesis in the first sentence, and write a separate paragraph for each key point. Underline key points to ease grading. Remember to save a few minutes to proofread and make any final corrections before turning in.
6. Change answers ONLY if you misread a question or just remembered a forgotten fact.
7. CHEATING IS FAR MORE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD THAN FAILING. You can retake a course, but expulsion or an honor violation on your transcript can't be erased.

STUDY

1. Review notes, textbook underlining, and returned tests. To remember, do MORE than read: recite aloud; write summaries; make lists, charts, maps, or flash cards; tape notes and listen; discuss ideas with a study group or tutor. Create test questions or problems and practice answering them.
2. More than one final on the same day? Allocate time carefully so you can study for one without worrying about the other. Decide if they deserve equal time or if one needs more; set up a schedule. You may study last for the first final, so it is fresh in your mind. Then, after the first, review for the second.
3. Don't overdo caffeine to stay awake, or you won't be able to sleep when you need to. Exercise is preferable. Need a break from thinking? To use up nervous energy, start packing to go home.
4. Resist the urge to blow off your last final, especially if it's on Saturday. Remind yourself of all the work you've already invested in that course. You want your final grade to reflect that investment.
5. Respect 24-hour quiet policies. Celebrate the end of your finals away from others studying.

YOU

1. After finishing a final, give yourself at least an hour off to unwind before starting to study again.
2. Dress for comfort, but also confidence.
3. For energy and concentration, at least eat 2 well-balanced meals a day. Limit caffeine, sugar, and alcohol.
4. Get adequate sleep. For best recall, wake up 1 to 2 hours before a test and eat a combination of protein and carbohydrates.

The Final Week

Once you've completed the Finals Planning sheet and the Four Weeks to Finals calendar use the 24/7 planner below to organize your Final Week.

First, enter the times of your finals, then fill in the remaining tasks during specific time periods on the days assigned in the Four Weeks to Finals calendar.

To be at your best during exams, plan time for adequate sleep, food and exercise during this critical period. You'll do better on an exam after a good night's sleep, and a protein meal to fuel both your brain and body is helpful.

Remember, 20-30 minutes of any aerobic exercise daily can help reduce stress and improve concentration.

***Note- this example is from a previous semester!**

The Final Week - EXAMPLE

	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed
	5-May	6-May	7-May	8-May	9-May	10-May	11-May	12-May
7am	Wake	Wake	Wake	Wake	Wake	Eat	Wake	Wake
8am	Eat	Eat	Eat	Eat	Eat	BIOL FINAL 8-11	Eat	Eat
9am	Study ACCT	Study BIOL	Study ACCT	Study ACCT	Study BIOL		Study PSYC	Study ENGL
10am								
11am	Exercise	Exercise	Exercise	ACCT FINAL 11:30-2:30	Exercise	Exercise	PSYC Final 11:30-2:30	Exercise
12pm	Eat	Eat	Eat		Eat	Eat		Eat
1pm	Study BIOL	Study PSYC	Study BIOL		Study BIOL	Study PSYC		Study ENGL
2pm			Study PSYC					
3pm	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	ENGL FINAL 3-6
4pm	Study PSYC	Study ACCT	Study ACCT	Study BIOL	Study PSYC	Study PSYC	Study ENGL	
5pm					Study ENGL	Study ENGL		
6pm	Eat	Eat	Eat	Eat	Eat	Eat	Eat	Eat
7pm	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time
8pm								
9pm								
10pm								
11p – 6a	SLEEP							

Goal GPA:

Fill in the dates of ***your*** last seven days in the top row below.

The Final Week

6 am							
6:30							
7 am							
7:30							
8 am							
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Goal GPA:

Fill in the dates of ***your*** last seven days in the top row below.

The Final Week

6 am							
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9 am							
10 am							
11 am							
12pm							
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2 am							
3 am							
4 am							
5 am							

Finals Preparation Checklist

Find additional resources at smu.edu/StudySkills

- Schedule a time to meet with your professors regarding any questions or concerns:
  - Current course materials- understanding/clarification
  - Questions regarding the final assessment

- Review all of your syllabi:
  - Check the attendance policy
  - Confirm the final exam schedule/information (double check on Registrar's website AND with your professor)

- Review all your scores on Canvas:
  - Tally all of your scores to gain a clear understanding of what grades to aim for to achieve your goal
  - Check for discrepancies and follow up immediately with professors on any questions

- Schedule an appointment with the Writing Center for any final papers

- Add the tutor schedule into your planner for the dates/times you need to work with a tutor

- Schedule any study rooms/spaces that will be needed

- If you need to use a printer, make sure you have ink and paper/money for PaperCut

- Prepare 1st, 2nd, and 3rd backup study locations

- Revisit the calendar over the entire semester:
  - Make sure you have all content and notes for any missed class

Prepare for Finals