

Prepare for Finals

There are many types of final assessments (exams, essays, projects, presentations, etc.). No matter the final, you can use the following three tools to help you plan your effective preparation for finishing out the semester.

Developing a Plan for Success

A realistic study plan can help you to divide your time and energy among several courses that helps build confidence and reduce anxiety.

Because finals play a critical part in determining your final grades, careful planning -- on paper -- is needed. Students often become so concerned about the amount of work involved in preparing for finals that they spend more time on worrying than studying. Planning can prevent anxiety, wasted time, and wasted energy. How you spend the last few weeks of the semester can make a significant difference in your GPA; the results are well worth an hour or two of advance planning. Before you start your plan make sure you have gathered these materials:

- Your course syllabi
- Access to Canvas
- Finals Schedule from the Registrar

All the materials in this packet provide their own specific benefits to effectively prepare for finals--be sure to use them all for maximum benefit.

1. Plan the “what” -- how you need to prepare for each final assessment -- with the Finals Planning Sheet.
2. Plan the “when” -- when you will complete all your preparation -- with the Four Weeks to Finals template.
3. Plan your last days of the semester with the Final Week Schedule. The week of finals can be a busy and stressful time, and you’ll want to be sure you manage your time well. Having a schedule in place will help you balance all of your priorities during this time.

How do I know what to do, or when to plan it all?

We’re here to help! You can find many resources about effective test preparation, strategic studying, and more on our website (smu.edu/StudySkills). Also, see the “Finals Preparation--Additional Resources” file online for a one-stop resource full of information to help you along.

Beyond this, remember to utilize the resources available to you!

- Academic Counseling... smu.edu/AcademicCounseling
- Tutoring... smu.edu/Tutoring
- Writing Center... Schedule appointments online and find more info at smu.edu/WritingCenter
- Office hours, review sessions, supplemental instruction, etc.

Study Smarter, Not Harder

It's not enough to plan time for study. Studying for long periods in ineffective ways -- studying harder -- can waste your time. Before you begin, resolve to choose more effective study methods to make every available minute count. That's studying smarter! Here are some ideas:

- Analyze the professor's test technique. What types of objective questions can you expect? Are essay questions broad or very focused? How detailed are the I.D. questions?
- Make up your own practice test. What topics were stressed? Turn statements in text and lecture into questions, then answer them in your own words to assess your readiness and find gaps in knowledge. Then, try to teach someone else!
- Change your point of view from mere memorization to deeper understanding and higher level thinking. Once you have memorized facts, look at their application. What kinds of case studies could you be given? How might you evaluate a theory or experiment? Look for "thought" questions in text or study guide, or brainstorm with other students. Go beyond memory; analyze, synthesize, compare, contrast.

Reading and re-reading is NOT studying!

- Reading alone is only a short-term memory operation, insufficient for test preparation. To produce real learning and recall, you need ACTIVE REVIEW TECHNIQUES. Research shows these produce thorough, long-term learning in LESS TIME than passively re-reading texts and notes.
- Write: condense notes and text into summary sheets, write one-page summaries of articles or chapters, make flash cards, create time lines or comparison/contrast charts. The thinking and writing involved demand concentration, test your comprehension, and foster better memory. The physical action of writing brings words and concepts more sharply before your mind and better preserves them in your memory. Creating written study tools is often the single most productive action you can take.
- Recite aloud: state ideas aloud in your own words. Don't assume you can define a term or compare and contrast two concepts; make yourself explain in detail, in your own words, to guarantee that you have more than a superficial understanding of ideas. Looking over pages and seeing familiar ideas establishes passive recognition, not the ability to actively produce information on demand. LOOKING OVER IS NOT STUDYING! The true test of studying is this: IF YOU CAN'T SAY IT, YOU DON'T KNOW IT.

- Predict and answer possible test questions, aloud or in writing. This forces you to select the most important points, to actively process or re-think the information, and to perform under simulated test conditions. To prepare for essay or I.D. questions, make index cards with a brief question on one side and the key points of an answer on the other. Make up questions early, then quiz yourself repeatedly and have others test you as well. To generate questions, use old exams, the syllabus, your notes, textbook tables of contents, chapter summaries or reviews, chapter or study guide questions. Questions are doubly effective for test preparation: you must THINK through the material to come up with questions, then THINK again to produce answers.
- Study groups can enhance individual review IF all members first study independently and set an agenda for each group session. This is an excellent setting to predict test questions, to answer them individually, and then to grade each other's responses by comparing them to the text and lecture notes. For essays, collectively work out an ideal answer for each question, briefly outline key points, then memorize. For problem-solving tests in math, stat., or engineering, work practice problems, timing each other, then check each other's work.

To memorize effectively, get more senses involved:

- Put important facts/dates/formulas on FLASH CARDS, adding color to create a strong visual image. Test yourself, then have a partner quiz you. Then take 2 to 4 cards at a time and try to define and discuss the relationships among the concepts. Talk aloud so you can reinforce through speech and hearing.
- Or make a MASTER LIST -- fold a sheet of paper in half, then list terms on the left side and definitions on the right side. Cover each side and alternately try to define each term aloud and give the term for each definition. Use color to group and categorize. Test yourself aloud on individual items, and then consider several items at a time.
- If you recall best what you hear, RECORD dates or formulas and listen repeatedly until you can recite with the tape.
- Prepare all flash cards, lists, or tapes. Then start to review as far ahead of the test as possible. Each day, review and test yourself in several SHORT, INTENSE memory/review sessions.
- In each session, use ALL SENSES: see it, say it, hear it, write it (or trace over it) to use visual, auditory, and motion learning channels.
- Remember that the key to memorization is associating the new information with something we are already extremely familiar with.

To simulate the actual test:

- Alone or in a group, PREDICT AND ANSWER possible test questions. Use notes and text to construct answers; outline points to make in an essay answer. Discover what you don't know well; study those topics again.
- Work math or statistics problems against a TIMER to improve speed and confidence. Rework all questions MISSED on earlier quizzes, homework, and tests; tough ones often reappear in the same or similar form.
- Find a time when the space is available and study or take a practice test in the same classroom your final exam will be in, or another similar one. When taking a practice test, set a timer to pace yourself.

If TEST ANXIETY is a problem, you'll boost confidence by using the Finals Plan and calendar to budget time and plan systematic review. Pay special attention to adequate sleep, exercise, and nutrition during the weeks before and of finals. Use a meditation app or visit the Counseling & Psychiatric Services Center (2nd floor of Health Center) to learn breathing exercises, positive self-talk, visualization, and relaxation techniques. All these can help you control anxiety during exams.

The DAY OF THE TEST, get up early enough to be fully awake and alert. Eat a meal with protein and carbohydrate to fuel your mind and body. Arrive at the test location on time, fully equipped (pens, pencils, calculator, etc.). Avoid talking to anyone, and try to sit at the front of the room to block your view of others who may distract you.

Before starting, look over the entire exam and do a memory dump, jotting down any memorized information to get it off your mind and onto paper. Outline essay answers before you write to improve organization, ensure against forgetting, and ease the grader's reading. Answer easier questions first, then return to ponder more difficult ones. Use brainstorming and free association to improve recall. Three hours is plenty of time; work carefully and steadily, using deep breaths and positive self-talk to stay calm.

Save time to proofread, but change answers **ONLY** if you originally misread or misunderstood the question or have remembered a fact. Except in those cases, your first answer is likely to be correct; don't change from right to wrong!

Use all possible RESOURCES:

- See your PROFESSOR or TA for advice on effective test preparation.
- Find a TUTOR at A-LEC: www.smu.edu/tutoring
- Organize a STUDY GROUP to teach and quiz each other.
- Attend the PROFESSOR'S or TA'S REVIEW SESSION.
- Schedule a WRITING CENTER appointment via Canvas.

Brown's Memory System: A-A-R-S Attend, Associate, Rehearse, Support

Suggestions from Dr. Alan Brown, SMU Psychology Professor

Lack of ATTENTION is the greatest memory problem. To best remember, make the memory more interesting, intense, and personal. Some tips:

1. Familiarize yourself with the subject; build up your background knowledge.
2. Make the experience personal by relating it to something in your life.
3. Intensify sensory impact by speaking loudly, writing in bright colors, moving objects.
4. Use competition with someone else, but only IF you enjoy it.
5. Avoid self-talk; daydreaming and worrying steal time and energy.
6. Physically prepare to remember; be rested and fed before you start.
7. Minimize environmental distractions by studying where you can concentrate.
8. Find the right level to begin at, with easier material first, then the harder part.
9. Don't juggle too much at once; break the material up into small batches.
10. Finish one task before going on to another.

ASSOCIATIONS are memory catalysts that establish memory quickly and clearly. Allow time to create and repeat the association. Try a few of these association styles:

1. Visual associations include images, name tags, lists, maps, charts
2. Auditory associations include unusual or distinct sounds, music, rhythm, rhyme, tone, and volume.
3. Motion associations include flow charts, films, note taking; walking or exercising as you study. Motor techniques get the brain fired up and involves the whole person in learning.

Remember this:

1. Avoid multiple, interfering associations. Learn similar concepts separately with distinct memories.
2. Avoid too much passive information, such as television, which can dull attention.

Ineffective REHEARSAL (rote repetition) does not produce recall. To rehearse effectively:

1. Review immediately after initial learning -- (after a class, after reading a chapter.)
2. Space out later rehearsals, gradually increasing the time between them. Pay attention to each rehearsal.
3. Set daily and weekly rehearsal times of 10-15 minutes at a stretch.
4. Quiz yourself to force active attention to the information.
5. Use a rehearsal partner so you can quiz each other.
6. Use different sensory channels; if you originally heard the info, write it. The more senses used, the better.
7. State it another way: paraphrase, condense, and reorganize. Describe it to a friend, compare it with something known, define it, argue for or against it, categorize it, apply it to your life.
8. Review in different settings, including the room in which you'll be tested.
9. Put it on tape, then play it while you drive, jog, or wait.
10. Over-rehearse, beyond feeling that you know it. Continued practice makes the memory quickly accessible and less likely to be disrupted by stress (as of a test) or interference.

Memory SUPPORT stores information externally. Consider these external memory reminders:

1. Related reminders (put the phone out of place to remind you to make a call)
2. Unrelated reminders (tie string on a finger or move a ring to the wrong hand to remind you of a task)
3. Written lists (mental lists waste time and require constant revision)
4. Appointment books, planners, or calendars (find and carry one you like)

Remember this:

1. Diversify supports, trying two or three for extra assistance
2. Be consistent, using the same device to remember the same task (ex. move phone to recall phone call)

| | To Reading: | To Listening: | To Take Tests: |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| Attend | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at peak energy time • Warm up to material by considering prior knowledge • Begin with easier material • Use an appropriate study area • Use the SQ4R reading strategy • Survey first to decide how much time you need • Chunk information into parts • Choose logical breaks • Stop for a break when concentration lags • Use a dictionary for understanding • Use pencils for easy erasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize unresolved work first • Avoid dividing attention • Arrive early to quickly review notes from prior classes • Do not bring unrelated materials • Sit close to the speaker • Fight drowsiness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Chew gum ◦ Breathe deeply ◦ Tense & relax muscles ◦ Change positions ◦ Loosen / tighten a watch • Compare notes with a partner | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify important exam details • Determine the type and number of questions |
| Associate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First read the outline and summary • Read twice: once fast, once slow • Visualize events and ideas • Underline in colors for memory accents • Speak aloud while underlining • Sketch diagrams and graphs • Link together mental images of key points • Discuss ideas with others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the speaker to diagram or chart information • Ask questions • Ask for examples • Ask for opinions • Draw images in your notes • Form mental pictures of main points • Tie ideas to your own experiences • Tie ideas to other classes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study within the same context of a test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Same time ◦ Same day ◦ Same pen / pencil ◦ Same desk / table ◦ Same food / drink • Reduce material to key points • Use mnemonic devices to support memory |
| Rehearse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate and answer questions after reading • Summarize in writing • Re-copy or type an outline or notes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the speaker 1:1 after class • Discuss with others who are interested • Teach someone else the material | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recite aloud or write information repeatedly • Generate and answer possible test questions • Quiz a study partner to see what you know • Make and review flashcards |
| Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid similar reading in the same study session • Add a personal index to your book or notes • Minimize interference – learn new information thoroughly • Pause after reading to recall • Mix easy tasks up with hard ones to pace yourself • Follow reading and memorization with sleep & rest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record yourself speaking a summary of your notes • Add visual images to notes • Sit in the same place for each class • Use the same pen, notebook, etc. each class • Rewrite your class notes in a new way • Review your notes each day | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get plenty of sleep • Eat a balanced meal • Survey the test before starting to determine your pace • Write memory aids first • Outline key points in essays • Cope with temporary blocks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Start with easy questions ◦ Relax before returning to harder questions ◦ Breathe slowly & deeply ◦ Recall your study context |

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 problems missed on tests, quizzes, homework Work hard problems in text that were not assigned | Do last homework assignments (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 chapters, 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. |

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**

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

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**

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

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 | FOUR WEEKS TO FINALS EXAMPLE | | |

*Note- this example is from a previous semester!

FOUR WEEKS TO FINALS

Goal GPA: _____

Semester Spring
 Year 2026

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------|-----------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| April 12 | April 13 | April 14 | April 15 | April 16 | April 17 | April 18 |
| April 19 | April 20 | April 21 | April 22 | April 23 | April 24 | April 25 |
| April 26 | April 27 | April 28 | April 29 | April 30 | May 1 | May 2 |
| May 3 | May 4 | May 5 - Last Class Day Follows a Friday Schedule | May 6 - Reading Day | May 7 - Reading Day | May 8 - Finals | May 9 - Finals |
| May 10 | May 11 - Finals | May 12 - Finals | May 13 - Finals | May 14 - Finals | May 15 | May 16 |
| | | | | | Celebrate & Relax! | |

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 | ACCT FINAL 11:30-2:30 | Study BIOL | Study PSYC | PSYC Final 11:30-2:30 | 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 | | | | | | | |

Prepare for Finals

Goal GPA:

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

Spring 2026 - The Final Week

| 6 am | | | | | | | |
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| 5 am | | | | | | | |

Goal GPA:

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

Spring 2026 - The Final Week

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Finals Preparation Checklist

Find additional resources at smu.edu/ASD

- 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