

REVIEWING FOR EXAMS

a helpful guide from the Academic Support Center

Quizzes, tests, and exams all fall into the category of assessments, and every university student will face some form of assessment during their time at Florida Tech. How a student chooses to prepare for an assessment will impact how well they will perform on that assessment. Not all students will prepare the same way, and certain strategies can prove more beneficial than others. Regardless of individual learning preferences or subject material, students can use some general strategies to learn more about the assessment and create a study plan to aid in their academic success.

Preparing for exams can be both academic and psychological.

Academic Preparation

- Start early with the syllabus, textbook, online course material, study groups, and outside resources
- Keep up with assigned reading and suggested homework
- Begin studying five to seven days before the exam
- Organize the information and create summaries
- Use a variety of study tactics to work with the information

Psychological Preparation

- Ask about the specific details of the exam (format, types of questions, time limits, allowed materials)
- Familiarize yourself with the environment if you're not in the same room as the regular class session
- Maintain a positive attitude regarding your abilities
- Eat well and get a good night's sleep before the exam

Question-Specific Strategies

Questions fall into two general categories. Knowing the type of questions that will be asked can help you figure out the best ways to prepare.

Recognition questions ask you to select or choose the correct answer from the options that are provided. True/false, matching, and most multiple choice questions fall into this category. For these types of questions, study via recitation and practice questions. Definitions and general facts can be reviewed using strategies like flashcards or quick question-answer sessions.

Recall questions ask you to retrieve information that you have learned and demonstrate that knowledge, often via open-ended responses or the application of that knowledge to a particular scenario. Exams where you solve a series of problems are an example of recall questions. Short answer and essay written responses are also considered recall questions. Preparing for these types of questions requires reorganization of the information and recitation of the material in different formats to create multiple connections between related pieces of information. Practicing problem sets and outlining answers for possible written responses are good ways to review.

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HOW TO MANAGE TEST ANXIETY

Moderate test anxiety is a normal part of taking a quiz or exam. In fact, a little bit of anxiety can heighten your senses and increase your focus and attention to detail. Unfortunately, it can be easy to become overwhelmed when faced with difficult material or a particularly long exam.

“True” test anxiety is more than just a feeling of nervousness. Some of the symptoms include an inability to focus during the exam, excessive negative thoughts (self-talk), and ‘blinking’ on exam but recalling the material afterward. Physical symptoms can include pounding heartbeat, rapid pulse, muscle tension, sweating, nausea.

Although everyone handles anxiety differently, there are some strategies to manage test anxiety or avoid the more serious symptoms:

- Set up a study plan and prepare over a five to seven day period
- Get sufficient rest for at least two nights before the exam
- Focus on your knowledge and preparation using positive self-talk
- Use recitation strategies to engage multiple learning modalities and connect key facts and concepts

Using the In-Class Review

Most university students realize that instructors use part or all of the class session before an exam to review material and answer students’ questions. Here are some ways to get the most out of an instructor-led review:

- Arrive on time and be ready to take notes
- Bring notes from readings and previous lectures, including any lecture slides or instructor-created diagrams
- Bring your textbook to mark key paragraphs and examples
- Ask how assigned homework will reflect the possible questions on the exam
- Ask how to use any graded quizzes to study for the exam
- Have questions to ask during the review, especially if you have attempted any study guide examples or practice test questions
- Make sure that you know one other person in class who is there for the review so you can compare your notes and check for missing information