

Final Exam Study Tips (1)

Keep perspective: The term will be over. You have succeeded before.
Remember: Yale is difficult, but you can handle it. Have confidence. Believe in yourself. Repeat to yourself often: "I can do it". "I am a good test taker."

Use reading period effectively (easier said than done, of course).

Go to review sessions. Find out in advance the format of the exam (IDs, essay questions, etc).

Check the exam schedule, which tells the room where your exam is given, *DAILY*. It will be posted on the web (see above). Changes do happen.

Find the way and place you study and prepare best, and go at it that way. Don't compare yourself with others. Find a way and level of study that works for you.

Take time for yourself each day -- a small indulgence, perhaps. Take a walk. Do something small for someone else. Visit friends. Eat well. Schedule quiet and private time. Get out.

Get enough Sleep, especially *the night before the night before the exam*. Lack of sleep inhibits efficient studying, concentration, and the ability to learn for recall later.

Study with a purpose. Determine your purpose for reviewing a particular book or lecture notes. Prepare (study) in digestible amounts. Schedule your time accordingly. Review lecture notes before the night before the exam, for instance.

Keep in mind the big picture of the course -- its major themes. Exams are the occasion for you to pull together in a coherent way what you have learned.

Look again at the syllabus to get a sense of the larger purposes and goals of the course. Be sure you did not miss any assigned reading in the small print (as I did once).

Find a study place or places that work for you. Sometimes changing study places can help. Some like studying in the same place all the time. It's OK to rely on stuffed animals, cozy clothes, totems, charms, and magic food.

Find a "study buddy." Study collaboratively.

Find library materials before the last minute when you may find them already checked out. Likewise, use the language lab early. It can be packed the day before the language exam.

Be courteous and thoughtful of the stress of others and their study needs. Remember the quiet hours (after 11PM during exam period). Rumor has it that mornings are a quiet time to study.

Put your alarm clock out of reach of your bed. Help each other remember when exams are. Get up an hour or more before the exam starts to wake up sufficiently, to get some nourishment, and to gather your thoughts. Take some treats with you to the exam (lifesavers or the like). Bring extra pencils or pens.

Read the exam all the way through before you start it. Try to follow the time suggestions for each question or part. Pass over questions that are too difficult or stump you; first answer the ones you can readily answer; return to the others later. Read the directions carefully. Make an outline for long essay questions. Give long essay questions a title to remind you of your focus. Write legibly; it matters. And try to remember that thinking can be fun, including the kind of extemporaneous thinking required for exams.

Suggested "awakeners" while studying: lots of water (yes, water -- a major cause of fatigue is dehydration), gum, going for a walk, short breaks, changing chairs, splashing cold water on your face. Leave the room. Stretch. Do Exercises. Take a walk in the cold air. Beware caffeine, which can inhibit much-needed sleep.

When you are running on little sleep, make no big decisions, draw no big conclusions (especially about your abilities and character). Your judgment and studying efficiency are impaired when you have too little sleep.

Exams are a test of your knowledge, not of personal worth.

When an exam is done, it is done. No need to dwell on it. Move on to the next task.

And remember: You belong at Yale. It is difficult, but you will be fine. A demanding college takes getting used to. You will get used to it and even better - you will discover resources within you that you do not know you have. Be optimistic! You have the good fortune to be surrounded by others who care about you.