

THE ABCs: STUDYING FOR MIDTERM EXAMS AND PAPERS

Be courteous and thoughtful of the stress of others and their study needs. Remember the quiet hours. Rumor has it that mornings are a quiet time to study.

Exams are a test of your knowledge and not a test of your identity and personal worth, although it is difficult to make those distinctions sometimes. Also, keep perspective if you can. Midterm period is a difficult time, but even this difficult time is an opportunity to look after yourself and others -- a cheerful word, some encouragement, a cookie -- small things that can mean so much, small things from one human to another.

Find a "study buddy." Study collaboratively.

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

Find library materials before the last minute, when you may find them already checked out. Remember your Personal Librarian!

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.

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

Put away and mute your phone, tablet, laptop, etc., before you go to bed and don't check for texts or emails during the night. Instead, sleep.

Keep in mind the big picture of the course -- the main themes introduced so far. Midterms are an occasion for you to pull together in a coherent way what you have learned up until now.

Keep perspective: midterms will be over. You have succeeded before.

Wake up an hour or more before the midterm starts to rouse yourself sufficiently, to get some nourishment, and to gather your thoughts. Bring extra pencils or pens to the exam.

Read midterm paper instructions carefully. Begin early. Ask your teacher or TA any questions you might have about the topic or the format of the paper before you begin writing. Sketch out an outline, write a draft, reread your draft, and rewrite your paper. Good editing leads to good writing.

Consult a writing tutor or writing partner, especially if this is your first Yale paper.

Study with a purpose. Prepare (study) in digestible amounts. Schedule your time

accordingly. Review lecture notes *before* the night before the exam, for instance.

Read your midterm 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.

While taking an exam or writing a paper you might even have fun thinking -- putting ideas together, calculating clearly, discovering themes, recalling with good effect, making connections coherently, making connections spontaneously, and finding you have personal resources you did not know you had. All these are possible.

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.

Remember, you will be fine. Really!

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."

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

Miscellaneous

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.

Suggested wellness activities

- leave the room
- stretch
- do exercises
- take a walk in the brisk fall morning air

Don'ts

- Beware of 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

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

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.