



# Exams (skill 2)

## 9. Top 3 book recommendations

- Becoming A Master Student by Dave Ellis
- Essential Study Skills by Linda Wong
- What Smart Students Know: Maximum Grades, Optimum Learning, Minimum Time by Adam Robinson
- More book recommendations at [www.conciselearning.com/books](http://www.conciselearning.com/books)

## Education is about more than just good grades

- "The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives." - Robert M. Hutchins
- Misconception: Grades will determine your success in life after college; Grades are good predictors of success in life after college
- Reality: Once you graduate, all grades will be forgotten; It's what you've learned in college that will stick with you; Nevertheless, you should aim to do your best on all exams
  - Learn the material
  - Sharpen your exam-taking skills

"One who asks a question is a fool for five minutes; one who does not ask a question remains a fool forever." - Chinese proverb

## 2. Before exam

- Make learning a daily habit
  - Repetition
  - Diagrams
  - Things that instructor writes on the board
  - Emphasis and highlights
  - Teacher reads from notes
  - Interest
- Watch and listen for clues during lectures
  - Ask your teacher
  - Put yourself in teacher's place
  - Are questions primarily from lectures, textbooks or other material?
  - Main themes, details, or both?
  - What course material will be covered?
  - Factual or analytic?
  - Who will be writing the questions?
  - Who will be grading?
  - "This is important"
    - Opinions
    - Values
    - Viewpoints
  - Teacher clues
  - Test format
    - Essays
    - Short-answer
    - Multiple choice
    - True/false
- Practice and review
  - Similar questions
    - The best way to practice for the exam
    - Same course
    - Similar courses
  - Old exams
  - Attend any review sessions
  - Talk to former students
- Don't cram
  - Seeing information for the very first time the night before or few nights before
  - Doesn't work with exams that test understanding
- Active & thorough practice and preparation the night before exam is very important
  - Anticipate questions
  - Reconstruct your entire visual map without mistakes
- Casually review visual map the day of the exam
  - Don't test yourself because even a small mistake will get you to panic

"The test of a good teacher is not how many questions he can ask his pupils that they will answer readily, but how many questions he inspires them to ask him which he finds it hard to answer." - Alice Wellington Rollins

## 3. During exam

- Be prepared
  - Learn the exam material
  - Have the required tools
- Get there early
  - Opportunity to relax
- Be comfortable
  - Beverage
  - Snack
  - Clothes
- Start immediately
  - Write important memory aids, formulas, or other important concepts on scrap paper or back of the exam
  - Scan exam
    - Number of questions
    - Types of questions
    - Importance of questions
  - Read directions carefully
- Read questions carefully
  - Don't jump to answer
  - Understand the question
  - Watch out for tricks
  - Think how to solve
  - Answer
  - Check your work
- Do easy questions first
  - Don't spend most time on questions you know least about
  - Don't start with long questions
  - Lets you build momentum with successes
- Dealing with difficult questions
  - Ask teacher for clarification
  - Skip them and think about them subconsciously
  - Try visualizing where you've seen the concept
  - Start writing anything
  - Look for clues in question or other parts of the exam
  - Think it out
  - Relax
- Don't get stuck
  - Move to the next question
  - Revisit hard question later
- Manage your time
  - Budget in advance
  - Keep an eye on time
  - Use entire time allotted
- Don't finish early
  - Rushing will lead to careless mistakes
  - Negative perception by teacher (test was too easy)
- Don't finish last
  - Don't get on your teacher's nerves by always asking for extra time
- Review your answers at the end
  - Look for careless answers
  - Don't doubt yourself

## 8. After exam

- "Judge others by their questions rather than by their answers." - Voltaire
- Update your chapter visual map
  - Content
  - Where was the focus?
  - Approach
  - Review exam
- You may get an extra point
  - Question confusing questions
- Dispute with professor
  - It happens
  - See if errors were made in grading
  - Go over mistakes with professor
- It doesn't hurt to ask
  - Ask for extra credit
- Learn from mistakes
  - What went wrong?
  - What almost went wrong?
  - What do you need to correct?
- Learn professor's style
  - What's the grading style
  - What did the comments say
  - Re-evaluate your learning process

## Writing 7. essays

- "The essay is a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything." - Aldous Huxley
- 1. Plan
  - Understand what the question is asking
  - Key words in question
  - Are intent and purpose clear?
  - Use visual maps for everything until you start writing the essay
- 2. Research
  - Do you have sufficient information?
  - What are pros and cons?
  - Stay focused on main idea
- 3. organize your ideas
  - Similar ideas under one heading
  - Distinguish between facts and opinions
  - How are they connected?
  - Complete and coherent picture
  - Does sequence fit purpose?
  - Is evidence detailed?
- 4. Take a position
  - Don't jump to conclusions
  - Thoroughly evaluate your position
  - Briefly address other perspectives
- 5. Support your decision
  - Defend your ideas with facts and examples
  - Write precisely and clearly with specifics
  - Acknowledge assertions and assumptions
  - Be exhaustive in evidence
- 6. Draft
  - Opening
  - Transition
  - Closing
  - Answer all questions
- 7. Revise
  - Content and organization
  - Coherent, word choice, clear, concise
- 8. Proofread
  - Spelling, punctuation, grammar, style
- 9. Write first draft
  - Strong introduction
  - Strong conclusion
- 10. Edit & revise
- 11. Reference all sources

## 6. Free answer questions

- "No man should escape our universities without knowing how little he knows." - J. Robert Oppenheimer
- Understand what the question is asking
- Write general notes and compose an outline
- Get to the point
- Be aware of teacher's bias toward answers
- Communicate effectively
  - Answer the question
  - Show examples
  - Show all your work for partial credit
  - Write legibly

## 5. True/false questions

- "Standardization is the fertilizer of college education. A little may be useful, but flowers do not grow in pure manure." - Martin H. Fischer
- Read entire statement
- Carefully examine details
- Absolute qualifiers generally indicate false statements
- Watch out for words that change the meaning

## Multiple choice 4. questions

- "There is a country in Europe where multiple-choice tests are illegal." - Sigfried Hultzer
- Think before you answer
  - Read very, very carefully
  - Read all choices
  - Answer on your own and then look for answer in the choices
- Skip hard questions and go back if you have the time
  - Many times it'll solve automatically in your head as you're thinking about other questions
  - Don't take questions personally since they all count the same
  - Try a new perspective if old perspective doesn't work
- Process of elimination
  - Eliminate obvious wrongs
- You have to think to solve problems
  - Don't under think questions
- Looking for traps in every question will get you into trouble
  - Traps are usually in overly simplified questions only
  - Don't over think questions
- There aren't any
  - Don't look for patterns
- Blanks are wrong automatically
  - Watch out for exams that penalize you for wrong answers
  - Always guess if you don't know
- Prevents bubbling wrong choice
  - Don't fill in scantly until you're done with the exam
- Write letter of correct answer next to number of question on exam paper