



## Sixth College Academic Advising Preparing for exams

Rule #1: The more active your review process, the better you will learn.

### **REVIEW TOOLS**

#### 1. Study checklists

- Identify and make a list of all material you will be tested on (notes, formulas, ideas or concepts, reading assignments)
- Organize studying into manageable chunks
- Plan time for each task

#### 2. Create summary notes and “concept mapping”

- Map out important ideas and relationships between concepts
- Make summary notes which display lists and hierarchies of ideas
- Create a visual framework to help recall ideas and details

#### 3. Create flashcards

- Make flashcards for formulas, definitions, vocabulary (esp. in foreign languages), or lists you have to memorize—put topics on one side of card, answers on the other
- Use flashcards to test your ability to recognize important information, AND, more importantly, to retrieve information from scratch
- Shuffle flashcards to change the sequence in which you test yourself; pick two cards randomly and try to make connections between the ideas or concepts (that is, try to explain one idea by using the other)

#### 4. Record information for rote memorization

- Make audio tapes of notes or portions of text that you must commit to memory
- Play tapes while walking to class or relaxing, to reinforce material

### **ORGANIZING FOR TESTS**

1. Begin reviewing early-use your syllabus to help you plan ahead.

## 2. Make weekly “study checklists”

- At the end of each week, compile your “study checklists” (at least for your most demanding or difficult courses)
- Review weekly concepts that were presented in lectures (or reading)
- Make your review “active” by mapping ideas or testing yourself with flashcards

## 3. Read (or at least preview) text assignments before lectures

- Make checklists of key concepts to listen for in the lecture
- Note questions that you’d like to ask in class (or after class)

## 4. Review with a group and/or join a study group

- Certain classes especially lend themselves to study groups
- Most students tend to remember ideas they have talked about with peers better than concepts they have read about or heard in lecture

## 5. Conduct a major review early enough to allow for a visit to the instructor

## 6. Break up the study tasks into manageable chunks

- Plan times of day to devote to each “chunk” of material
- Break between stretches of studying (no more than 60 minutes of studying before a break)
- Studying while you are mentally fatigued is usually a waste of time

## CONCEPT MAPPING

### *Why map?*

- Outlining is linear and organized, but **NOT THE WAY OUR MINDS WORK.**
- Our minds work like websites: ideas or concepts are *linked* together, or even go off on their own into other groupings or webs
- *Learning* combines what you already know with new information (what you want to know), and links this new information with what we already understand
- *Memories* then process these new LINKS and associations for later recall

*When to map?*

Organizing a subject

Bringing about “deeper” learning

Integrating new and old ideas

Preparing for tests

### TAKING NOTES

Placing new ideas in a structure

Preparing to preview a reading assignment

Understanding complex ideas

*How to map?*

1. Forget the idea of an outline, or of notes in sentences
2. Think of key words or symbols that represent ideas & words
3. Think *visually*
4. Start with the most important stuff in the center, and work out like spokes of a wheel
5. Keep this to add to, using reading assignments, notes from study groups, etc. **REORGANIZE IT AND REVISE IT AS YOU UNDERSTAND MORE.**

Information from the Learning Center, University of North Carolina  
<http://learningcenter.unc.edu/Resources/Handouts/Tests>