Preparing for Tests and Exams

Dealing with the demands of assessments is often one of the most challenging parts of college life. But with careful planning and a few helpful strategies, you can get the most out of your study time.

How to Become Exam-Savvy

Most students find writing tests and exams difficult because they feel:
- There's too much material to cover
- There's not enough time
- Unable to absorb the material
- Stressed or overwhelmed before or during the exam

Instead, here are some approaches to improving your test and exam-taking skills.

Improve your Time Management

**Start Early and Get Organized** – Collect material to be reviewed and organize notes by topic or priority. Make a plan of the topics to cover and break them up into manageable sections (University of Toronto: Academic Success Centre, 2015).

**Schedule Study Time and Breaks** – Assign more time to difficult areas. Schedule time for breaks and unexpected delays (The University of Edinburgh: Student Counselling Services, 2013).

**Avoid Procrastination** – Don’t cram the night before. Instead, set realistic study session lengths and reward yourself (The University of Edinburgh: Student Counselling Services, 2013).

For more on time management, see our time management brochure and the Library’s Time Management Guide: https://sheridancollege.libguides.com/timemanagement
Study Actively

An exam tests how you understand the material, not just your ability to memorize it. Simply reading and highlighting are passive study strategies. Instead, try these active study strategies:

- Rewrite your notes in your own words
- Draw diagrams of concepts
- Create a mind map of how course concepts relate to each other
- Relate course concepts to other courses, or your everyday life
- Come up with your own questions to test yourself
- Try to find the underlying principles of the course material (Tracy, 2006)

Tips for Writing Tests and Exams

Here are some tips to help you on test/exam day:

Before you start – Read over the exam and plan how you’ll spend your time. Carefully read each question and underline key words and concepts (Tracy, 2006).

Start wherever you like – You don’t have to answer questions in order. If you know the answer to a question, start there to get yourself moving. Or, if a question seems intimidating, start there to get it out of the way (The University of Edinburgh: Student Counselling Services, 2013).

How to Handle Specific Questions

- For long answers, plan out an outline in the margins
- For multi-part questions, read through all the parts before answering
- For tricky multiple-choice questions, eliminate clearly wrong answers
- If two answers seem equally correct, remember one is designed to be a better answer
- In multiple choice, try to think of your own answer before even reading the options (Tracy, 2006)
- Take micro-breaks to prevent yourself from running out of steam
- Try to answer all questions; don’t leave blanks

Before you hand it in – Always leave time at the end of the exam for one last review (The University of Edinburgh: Student Counselling Services, 2013).

Good luck!

Resources

Tutoring

The Tutoring Centre offers tutoring at no additional cost to Sheridan students.

Visit the Tutoring Centre at:

- Davis – Room J104
- HMC – Room A118B
- Trafalgar – Room C113

Email: tutoring@sheridancollege.ca

Student Advisement

This is the center for all student questions and requests for information on anything related to Sheridan.

- Davis - Room B230
- HMC - Room A247
- Trafalgar - Room B104

E-mail: askanadvisor@sheridancollege.ca

Academic Integrity Office

Visit this office at any of the three campuses for support, resources, and information regarding academic integrity.

- Trafalgar – C151a
- HMC – A211
- Davis – J214L

Email: aif@sheridancollege.ca

References