

# Tips for Writing Your Exams

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To be mentally prepared for finals, you must know the material. Start studying as soon as possible (ideally three weeks before the exam) to prevent the stress of cramming.

## Here are some simple exam-writing strategies:

- Once you begin the exam, **immediately write down any key terms or formulas you have memorized.** You can reference this as needed throughout the exam.
- **Read the instructions carefully.** Sometimes you are only expected to complete part of the exam instead of every question. Ask for clarification if you are unsure.
- **Review the contents, format and scoring of the exam.** Skim over the questions to get an idea of how much time is required for each question. Plan your time according to the questions and what they are worth; identify more complex or straightforward questions. Allot enough time to review your exam at the end.
- **Address each question carefully in a systematic manner.** Underline keywords when you read each question. Did the question ask more than one question? You may include ideas/calculations in the margins or on the back of your exam if you think this will help you solve the problem. Show the steps you took to find the solution.
- **Write an answer for every question** - as long as you will not be penalized. Sometimes we make correct educated guesses. If you don't know the answer, always provide a definition or a related concept as this may earn you partial marks. Write your answer in point form if you notice you are running out of time.
- **Review your exam once you finish.** Do not change answers unless you are 100% sure that the answer is wrong. Usually, when we don't know for sure, our first hunch is correct. If you are writing a math exam, use reverse calculations to check your answers.
- **Use all the time you are given to write an exam.** Do not leave right when you are finished. If you were unsure about some of your answers, more time thinking about it might allow information to surface in your memory.
- **Review your exam when you get your results back.** Try to figure out what went wrong so you can improve next time.

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