

Tips for Take-Home Exams

Preparation is key

A common misconception with take-home exams is that students don't need to study and prepare for them because they will be able to find all the answers in their notes or textbooks. Although you may be able to find a few answers in the moment, you will still need to study and understand the material. Most importantly, you need to understand the content and know how to apply it. Many students find take-home exams are more difficult than in-person, as the professor knows students have access to the materials so the questions are typically in greater detail and the expectations are higher.

Tips for studying at home

It is important to study and prepare for take-home exams similar to how you would for in-person exams. Here are some important reminders:

- Attend all lectures! If your lectures are online (even possibly pre-recorded), treat them as if they were in-person and watch all lecture recordings during scheduled class time. It is important to keep a routine and not fall behind with your course work.
- Maintain regular study time to ensure lectures, videos, and readings are being done prior to the exam date.
- Use the learning outcomes listed on your course syllabus; turn each of them into a question. Ensure you can describe in detail or answer each one (depending on the content). It is recommended to find the topics in your textbook and/or lecture notes and put a labelled sticky note to find it with more ease during your exam.
- Use a colour-coded sticky note method. Use one colour that represents definitions/important terms, another colour for large concepts discussed in class, and another colour for possible long answer/essay questions etc.
- Ask yourself, what are the most important topics I will be tested on? What has the professor mentioned several times or gone into detail about during lecture time? You will likely be tested on those items.
- Create a formula cheat sheet or a cheat sheet with concept maps for quick reference of materials. The type of cheat sheet will depend on the course.

Tips for test taking

- Set a specific date and time to work on your take-home exam to avoid procrastination. You may be given a few days or a week to complete the take-home exam.
- Use a simple kitchen timer, cell phone timer or [online timer](#) to ensure you stay on track and finish before the deadline. With open-book take-home exams, you will have more time than usual to finish the exam.
- Set up a clean, distraction-free test taking environment. If your family is home or your roommates are taking over the common room or kitchen table, find a quiet space and let everyone know you cannot be disturbed.
- Turn off your cell phone and all other electronic reminders/notifications.
- Ensure you have all the required resources and materials with you before you start writing your exam.
- Install additional or special software if required. Ensure you have it installed on your computer prior to the date you plan to complete the exam. Also, if you need to use the Internet, ensure you have a proper connection before completing your exam.
- Follow academic integrity policies when completing take-home exams. If your take-home exam entails long answer/essay format, students should not use the [Writing Room](#) (Student Learning Centre) to edit and review exam work. In addition, you should not ask friends or classmates to help with take-home exams.

- Take one more final look over the exam prior to submitting. If you worked on your exam for a predetermined amount of time and feel all answers have been completed, look over the entire final exam and submit it. Don't spend days reviewing it if everything has been answered. Trust your gut and submit the exam. Most likely you have other exams and assignments to work on.

Reward yourself

Always take some time to celebrate your accomplishments and reward yourself with something that makes you happy. Go for a walk, play a video game, or watch a show on TV. After you get your marks back for any exam, quiz, test or assignment, it's always best to review your work to see what you did correctly and areas to improve on and study more.

Student Learning Centre

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