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# Student Survival Guide

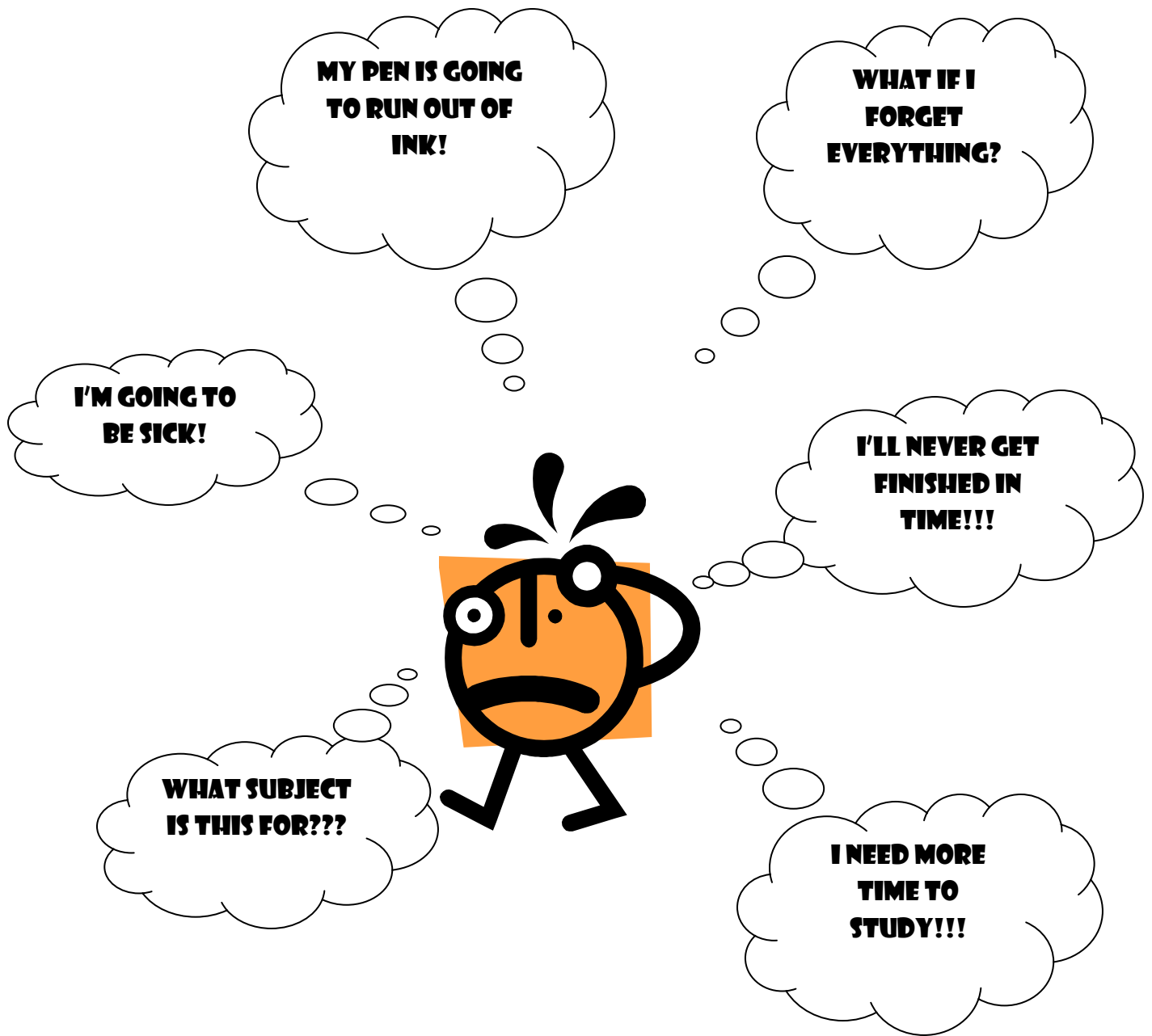


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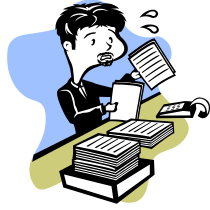
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# Coping With Exam Anxiety



"The only way to pass any test is to take the test."  
Anonymous.



# Exam Anxiety

- ✓ Register for courses at the appropriate level of difficulty
- ✓ Review properly: daily reviews, weekly reviews, major reviews.
- ✓ Predict what will be on the test
- ✓ Practice different levels of questions
- ✓ Put the test in perspective
- ✓ Get aerobic exercise
- ✓ Practice progressive relaxation
- ✓ Try visualization
- ✓ Meditate

## Predicting What Will be on the Test

1. Check the course outline or syllabus for the general goals or purpose of the course, specific objectives for the chapter or section, and any comments regarding the exam.
2. Think about what the professor has emphasized in class.
3. Obtain copies of the old exam if possible.
4. Look through your notes to see what was emphasized.
5. Check your textbook (and study guide) to see what is emphasized.

6. If your professor does not say anything about the exam, plan to ask:

- ✓ Will the exam be mainly from the text or mainly from lectures?
- ✓ What type of questions will it have?
- ✓ What topics will be emphasized?
- ✓ How long will it be?
- ✓ What percent of course grade is it worth?
- ✓ What materials are allowed in the exam room?



# Strategies to Minimize Anxiety Before a Test

1. Bolster your self-confidence through:
  - a. Studying lots and over-learning
  - b. Visualization
  - c. Positive self-talk
2. Set up a "preparing for the test" schedule and let family, friends and roommates know about it.
3. Get used to test situations to help minimize discomfort.
4. Try to get happy before a test by listening to a favorite song or going for a quick walk.
5. Brush up on test-taking strategies (see pg.11).
6. If you feel terrified of tests, you may have a phobia and may want to speak to a counselor for more specific strategies.
7. Learn some relaxation techniques to use before and during exams.
8. Guide your thinking. Don't let your mind dwell on scenarios of test-taking disaster.
9. Make sure you have all the test-taking supplies you'll need (pens, pencils, erasers, text and/or notes if it's open-book) ready to go by your front door before you go to bed. Also, make sure you have your clothes picked out and ready the night before.
10. Keep things in perspective. Chances are this particular test will not "make you or break you". It's one test among the dozens you will write during your college career.
11. Eat a good breakfast and get lots of sleep.



# Strategies to Minimize Anxiety During a Test

1. Concentrate
  - a. Get rid of distractions
  - b. Take 30 seconds before you begin to calm yourself and focus your attention
  - c. Visualizing doing well on the exam and slowing your breathing will help you concentrate.
2. Choose your seat wisely. Don't sit near a source of distraction such as a window, a noisy radiator, or a noisy friend!
3. Information dump. Information dumping is when you jot down everything you know on the back of your test booklet as soon as the test begins.
4. If the test anxiety persists, let it "be a spectator"; try to separate yourself from that anxious feeling and instead put your energy into the test.
5. Above all else, push on and finish the test.



# Strategies to Minimize Anxiety After a Test

1. Review. Identify your mistakes and correct them.
2. Discuss the test with your classmates or instructor if you think it would make you feel better to confirm your right answers.
3. Revise and modify your study strategies.
4. Learn from each test-taking experience.
5. Talk to someone about your anxiety. Often just sharing your feelings with a friend or family member will make you feel better.



# Exam Preparation





# Preparing for Exams

**Strategy 1:** *Be diligent about ongoing review.* Review daily (within 24 hours of class), review all new material weekly, and then review everything a few days before a test.

**Strategy 2:** *Have a plan for your major review.* You should be reviewing, not learning. Start 1-2 weeks before the exam.

**Strategy 3:** *Decide which study strategies are best for you.*

**Strategy 4:** *Prioritize what you need to learn.* Work on the most difficult areas first.

**Strategy 5:** *Ask for help.*

**Strategy 6:** *Create review tools.* Some examples are: study checklists, summary sheets, mind maps, flash cards, creating your own "mock exam", copies of old exams (if possible).

## Study Tips

- ✓ Practice the tasks you will do on the test.
- ✓ Find at least one study partner in each class.
- ✓ Try teaching another person. William Glasser once said that we learn only 10% of what we read, but we learn 95% of what we teach someone else!
- ✓ Prepare for each class as if you were having a quiz.
- ✓ Make sure your notes are complete.
- ✓ Learn from past exams.
- ✓ Attend review classes.
- ✓ Identify your areas of weakness and work on them.

## Techniques for Math and Science

- ✓ Review and keep up on basic skills.
- ✓ Keep up with assignments.

- ✓ Learn from your mistakes.
- ✓ Do as many questions/problems as possible.
- ✓ Practice scientific attitude—accuracy, precision, fact.
- ✓ Master your calculator.
- ✓ Prepare for labs.
- ✓ Learn the process, not just the answer.

### **How to Cram (if you absolutely have to)**

- ✓ Cram as close to the exam as possible (but not overnight).
- ✓ Be realistic: prioritize & focus on the basics.
- ✓ Get some sleep.

### **Psyching Yourself Up (psychological preparation)**

- ✓ Be realistic about your goals
- ✓ Look at the exam weighting, so that you know how much the exam is worth.
- ✓ Be mentally ready (see “Strategies to Minimize Anxiety Before a Test”).
- ✓ Remember that this mark is not everything.

### **What to do in the Days Leading up to an Exam**

- ✓ Take good care of yourself. Eat properly and get enough rest.
- ✓ Resist comparing yourself to other students.

### **What to do the Day Before the Exam**

- ✓ Be positive.
- ✓ Keep the exam in perspective.
- ✓ Eat, drink water, have a snack and relax.
- ✓ Don't discuss the exam with peers before or after the exam if it will make you feel anxious about your performance.





# Test-Taking Strategies

## Use the first 5 minutes wisely

- ✓ Skim the entire exam
- ✓ Budget your time
- ✓ Write down formulas/acronyms before you start

## General Hints

- ✓ Read directions carefully.
- ✓ Answer some easy questions first.
- ✓ Check to make sure you are actually **answering the question**, and not just giving information on the topic.
- ✓ Write neatly.
- ✓ Don't spend a lot of time on low mark questions.
- ✓ Look for clues to questions you don't know in other questions.
- ✓ Do not work too quickly, even if you may not complete the exam.
- ✓ Use all the time allocated.

## Hints for Answering Specific Types of Questions

### Short Answer

- ✓ Read the question twice.
- ✓ Decide on the best way to answer.
- ✓ Outline your answer noting all points.
- ✓ Leave space between questions to expand your ideas.
- ✓ Use the number of marks the question is worth to determine the amount of detail required in the answer.

### Problem/Formula

- ✓ Identify which type of problem it is
- ✓ Think of the process and outline the steps; underline the key facts.
- ✓ Plug facts into the process, crossing out the facts as you use them.
- ✓ Show all steps and calculations.

- ✓ Check to make sure that you are using the correct units.

### **Matching**

- ✓ Do the easiest questions first.
- ✓ Cross out the answers as you use them.
- ✓ Use the process of elimination.

### **True/False**

- ✓ Make sure that all parts of the statement are true before marking 'T'.
- ✓ Beware of absolute words such as: always, never, and all of the time.
- ✓ Guess, unless the test will be marked by subtracting the number of wrong answers from the number of right answers.

### **Fill in the Blank**

- ✓ These are usually factual or memory questions.
- ✓ Look for clues in other questions.
- ✓ Guess.

### **Multiple Choice**

- ✓ Answer the question in your mind first and then look at the answers.
- ✓ Look for your answer among the choices.
- ✓ If you don't know the answer, treat each choice as a T/F question and use the process of elimination.

### **Open Book**

- ✓ Be very familiar with materials, so that you can quickly find information.
- ✓ Complete practice questions while using the materials.
- ✓ Commit some of the information to memory.

### **Lab**

- ✓ Complete easy tasks first.

### **Programming**

- ✓ Underline key points of a program description.
- ✓ Determine inputs and outputs
- ✓ Write only what is required.

# Before You Hand in Your Exam...

- ✓ Review your answers and check your calculations.
- ✓ Do not change answers unless you are really sure of the change.
- ✓ Check that your name is on your paper
- ✓ Check that you have answered all questions and that answers line up on the scantron sheet.



# Time Management





# Effective Time Management

## **Step 1: Keep track of how you actually spend your time now.**

Use the Weekly Planning Schedule to keep track of your time, ideally for 1 full week. The more accurate and honest you are, the more valuable the information will be. This experience can be a real “eye-opener”!

## **Step 2: Write down your goals. Be concrete and specific.**

Try writing 2-3 personal, career, and/or relationship long-term goals. For each of those, create a few short-term goals to help you reach the long-term goal.

For example, if my long term goal is to **graduate from college**, my short-term goals might be: 1. **Pass all of my midterms**, 2. **See an advisor before Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> to make sure I have all of the courses I need**, and 3. **Devote 20 minutes every day to daily review.**

Check to make sure you have written **SMART** goals. **SMART** goals are: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**imed.

## **Step 3: At the end of the day ask yourself these questions:**

- ✓ Was my day balanced between school/work, personal time and time with family and/or friends?
- ✓ Do I feel good about myself at the end of the day?
- ✓ Did I get enough sleep last night?
- ✓ Did I eat healthy and nutritious meals?
- ✓ Did I make time for exercise and relaxation?
- ✓ How much time during this day did I spend on activities that were directly related to my goals?

- ✓ How much of my day did I spend on activities that were unimportant or unrelated to my goals?
- ✓ Did I have a list of activities I wanted to accomplish, either in my mind or written down? Did I complete the list?
- ✓ How much of my energy did I spend dealing with stressful or crisis situations?

#### **Step 4: Review and Evaluate your Weekly Planning Schedule.**

First ask yourself: Where could I improve my use of time? Did I meet my goals over the week? Then, use a highlighter to fill in the time on your schedule you felt was spent unproductively. With another colour of highlighter, fill in the time that was spent productively. This should give you an idea of where you could improve.

#### **Step 5: Make a "trial" time log for the following week.**

- ✓ Schedule fixed blocks e.g. sleeping and class time first.
- ✓ Be realistic about how much time activities take.
- ✓ Include time for errands, paying bills, and fun time.
- ✓ Allow yourself some down-time.
- ✓ Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions.

#### **Step 6: Analyze and evaluate on an ongoing basis.**

Remember that the goal of time management is to help you to get more fulfillment and enjoyment out of life. If that's not happening, revise your plans!





## Time Saving Tips

Check off the tips that you think would work for you, and then choose a few to work on.

- Make a daily "to-do" list.
- Prioritize your "to-do" list (A=priority/critical item, B=important, C=could do/would like to do, D=delegate, E=eliminate).
- Use a Day Timer.
- Schedule in priorities, including time with family and friends.
- Use a Weekly Planning Schedule.
- When you feel overwhelmed, stop and ask yourself "is what I'm doing now a good use of my time?"
- Get everything you need in the morning organized the night before.
- Review daily and weekly to avoid having to "cram".
- Take breaks. Study a maximum of 50 minutes then take a 5-10 minute break.
- Minimize distractions.
- Learn from the past. What could you improve on from last week or last semester?
- Organize your work space.
- Control your television, computer and phone.
- Notice how others misuse your time.
- Learn to say "no".

- Fit tasks into "waiting time". For example, review your notes from class while you wait for the bus.
- Use your peak energy times for your most challenging tasks.
- Beware of becoming a perfectionist.
- Spend more time studying what you don't know, than reviewing what you do know.
- Eat regularly to avoid unproductive study time due to hunger and inability to concentrate.
- Develop a regular routine for sleeping, eating, and studying.
- Find new time-saving techniques (make weekly menus, freeze meals ahead, consider internet banking, shop during non-peak hours, run errands efficiently etc.)
- Prepare ahead for peak exam times.
- Ask for help.
- Learn to manage procrastination.

Write one time management goal that is appropriate and realistic for you over the next week:

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# Weekly Planning Schedule 1

|         | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |         |
|---------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| 6:00am  |     |      |     |       |     |     |     | 6:00am  |
| 7:00am  |     |      |     |       |     |     |     | 7:00am  |
| 8:00am  |     |      |     |       |     |     |     | 8:00am  |
| 9:00am  |     |      |     |       |     |     |     | 9:00am  |
| 10:00am |     |      |     |       |     |     |     | 10:00am |
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# Weekly Planning Schedule 2

|         | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |         |
|---------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| 6:00am  |     |      |     |       |     |     |     | 6:00am  |
| 7:00am  |     |      |     |       |     |     |     | 7:00am  |
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# Things To Do

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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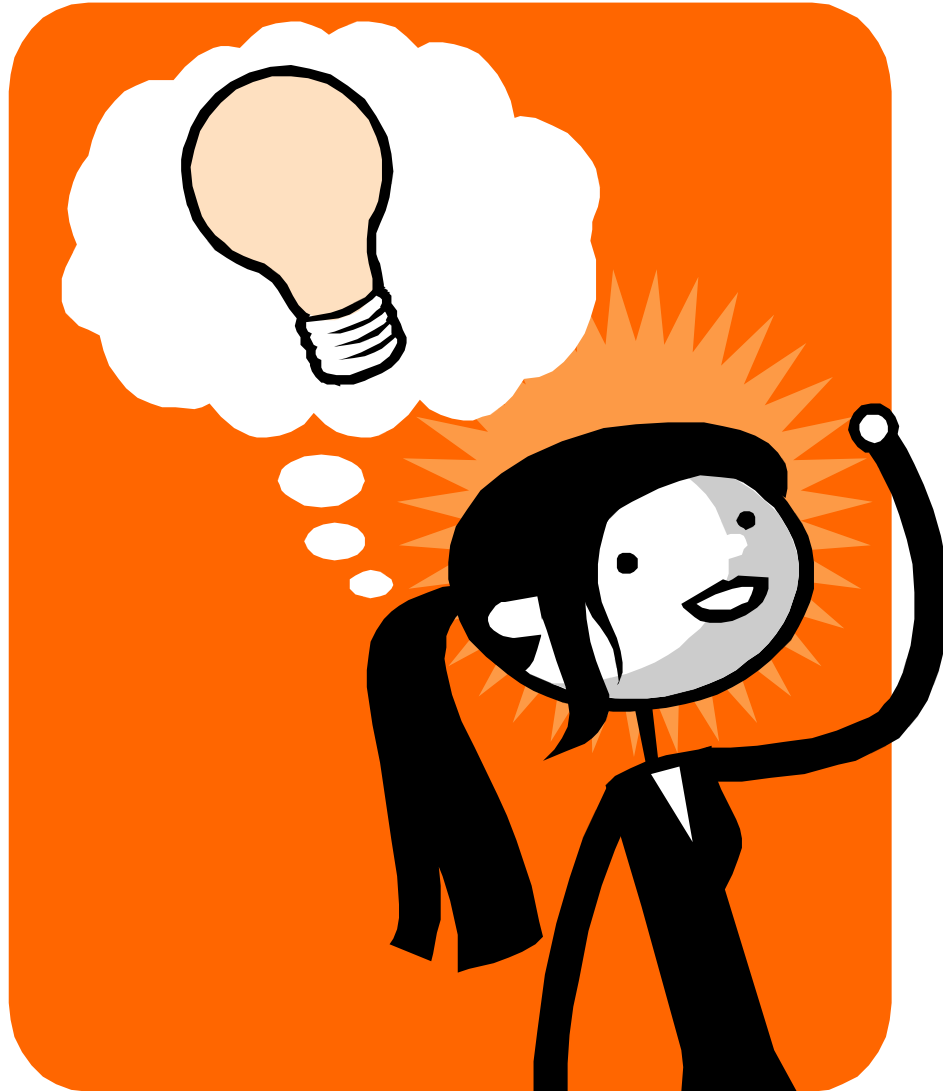
# Things To Do

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# Concentration, Memory and Learning





# Improving Concentration

In order to get materials into long-term memory, the ability to concentrate is essential. It is possible to improve your concentration, but you should not aim to concentrate for more than 45-50 minutes at one time.

Some situations make it almost impossible to concentrate. Keep the following acronym in mind when you study.

**H** – hungry  
**A** – angry  
**L** – losing it  
**T** – tired

If you are hungry, angry, losing it or tired there is no point in forcing yourself to study. You will get very low returns for your efforts. So, HALT! Instead, do something to rectify the situation. Have a snack, calm yourself down, deal with personal situations or take a nap.

## Improving Your Concentration

- Step 1: Examine the causes of poor concentration and decide which ones apply to you.
- Step 2: Determine realistic solutions.
- Step 3: Set goals to control distractions and improve concentration.

### 1. Causes

**External:**

Environmental distractions  
TV, too comfortable chairs, snacks, other people, nice view etc.  
Noise  
Music with words, talking

**Internal:**

Hunger, drowsiness

### 2. Possible Solutions

Re-arrange a distracting environment.  
Go to a library or classroom if your home environment is not under your control.  
If possible, use your study area for study only.

Train yourself to study away from others and in silence.

Plan to study when you are most alert.  
Study a maximum of 45-50 minutes per study period.  
Take breaks between study periods.  
Do 5 minutes of light exercise to get your blood

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>flowing.<br/> Eat regular meals and snacks.<br/> Get into regular routines for sleeping, studying and eating.<br/> Know how much sleep you need and plan to get it.</p>  |
| Boredom, Dislike, Disinterest                | <p>Find a reason which satisfies you for taking the class.<br/> Alternate more &amp; less interesting subjects.<br/> Vary the way you study; study actively.<br/> Challenge yourself to find something interesting.<br/> Talk with other students, a prof, or employees in the field.<br/> Work with others.<br/> Think of the consequences.</p>  |
| Anxiety about studies                        | <p>Use positive affirmations.<br/> Put the course in perspective.<br/> Learn relaxation techniques.<br/> Set realistic standards.<br/> Set small achievable goals.<br/> Use humour every day.</p>   |
| Intimidating study tasks/feeling overwhelmed | <p>Break up large tasks into achievable subtasks.<br/> Set small goals.<br/> Do the most intimidating task first.<br/> Give yourself rewards for progress.<br/> Limit outside commitments.</p>  |
| Daydreaming                                  | <p>Set study goals for each session.<br/> Separate daydreams from studying.<br/> Schedule "downtime" for daydreaming.<br/> Do something creative every day.<br/> Use "thought stopping" (yell "stop" in your head every time your thoughts drift, then go right back to studying).<br/> Use the "checkmark" technique. Make a check on a scrap of paper every time you lose focus. Next time you study set the goal of getting less checkmarks.</p> |
| Personal worries                             | <p>Identify and define the problem, brain storm possible solutions and develop a concrete, specific plan to resolve personal worries. Then get right back to work. If you can't deal with the problem alone make arrangements to talk with someone who can help (friend or counselor).</p>  |

## 7. Set Goals

Decide the main things you need to do to improve concentration. Write down 2 or 3 short-term, specific realistic goals to improve your concentration.



# Memory and Learning

You can improve your memory and learning skills. Before you start, here are some important precursors:

1. **Believe in Yourself** – Be confident that you have the abilities and skills to succeed. You got this far, didn't you?
2. **Develop a Positive Attitude** – A positive attitude toward course material and toward your ability to learn enhances memory and learning. While negative self-talk such as "I've never been good at school" can interfere with memory and learning, realistic self-talk such as "I can learn this stuff" or "I have a good memory" can actually boost learning.
3. **Know Yourself** – What type of learner are you (visual, auditory, tactile-kinesthetic)? How do you learn best? (reading out loud, writing notes, group work)? At what time of day are you most alert?

## Memory and Learning Techniques

### 1. Repetition

- Review class material within 24 hours, and again at the end of the week (more often if it's possible). You will forget approximately 80% of class material with 24 hours unless you review!
- Allow at least 15 minutes per subject for daily review. Skim your notes, highlight main points and jot down any points that you need to clarify.
- For weekly review allow at least one hour per subject. Review actively by testing yourself and doing problems related to the material.

### 2. Imagery

- Our minds remember best in terms of pictures. As you read visualize the contents of the material.

- Visualize images that are colorful, vivid and humorous. To remember a list you can imagine a story made up of images.

### **3. Make new material meaningful.**

- Ask yourself how the material you are learning relates to your future career, your current life, and/or something you already know.

### **4. Mnemonic Devices (memory tricks)**

- Acronyms are an example of mnemonic devices that can help you to recall facts. "HOMES" is an acronym for the great lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior. "My very elegant mother just served us nine pies" is an acronym to remember planets in order of distance from the sun (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto).

## **Learning Enhancers**

- Understand the material, rather than just memorizing it.
- Break your material into small, manageable chunks and learn one chunk at a time.
- Study your most important or most difficult material first.
- Study a maximum of 45 to 50 minutes per session.
- Take a 5 or 10 minute break between study sessions.
- Alternate subjects each session.

## **Memory Boosters**

### **1. Enhancing Information Storage and Retrieval**

- Write down a goal at the beginning of each study session.
- Learn from the general to the specific. Skim chapter and section headings, read the introduction and summary, and look briefly at diagrams and charts, then go back and read the material in detail.
- Put yourself on an information diet (look at what is emphasized in the lectures and the course outline). Don't learn what you don't need to know.
- Put material into your own words.
- Learn complete units at one time.
- Memorize something every day.

- Teach the material to someone else.
- Learn actively.
  - Learn a small amount and then do something with the material.
  - Close your text after each section and summarize the main points.
  - Use multiple senses.
    - Write it down.
    - Recite out loud.
    - Visualize.
  - Create pictures or diagrams.
  - Make a list of key words or ideas that summarize the content.
  - Predict exam questions. Make up your own "test" on index cards.
- Test yourself on an ongoing basis.
- Review what you really want to remember right before you go to sleep.
- Train yourself to concentrate (see pg.23).

## **2. Creating a Physical Setting to Boost Memory**

- Reduce interference (noise and other distractions).
- Study with natural light when possible.
- Avoid marathon study sessions.
- Study to a similar setting as the exam if possible.

## **3. Personal Habits to Boost Memory**

- Exercise regularly.
- Sip water throughout the day.
- Eat regular and healthy snacks.
- Get into a study routine early in the semester.
- Take regular breaks.
- Relax.
- Make sure you get enough sleep.

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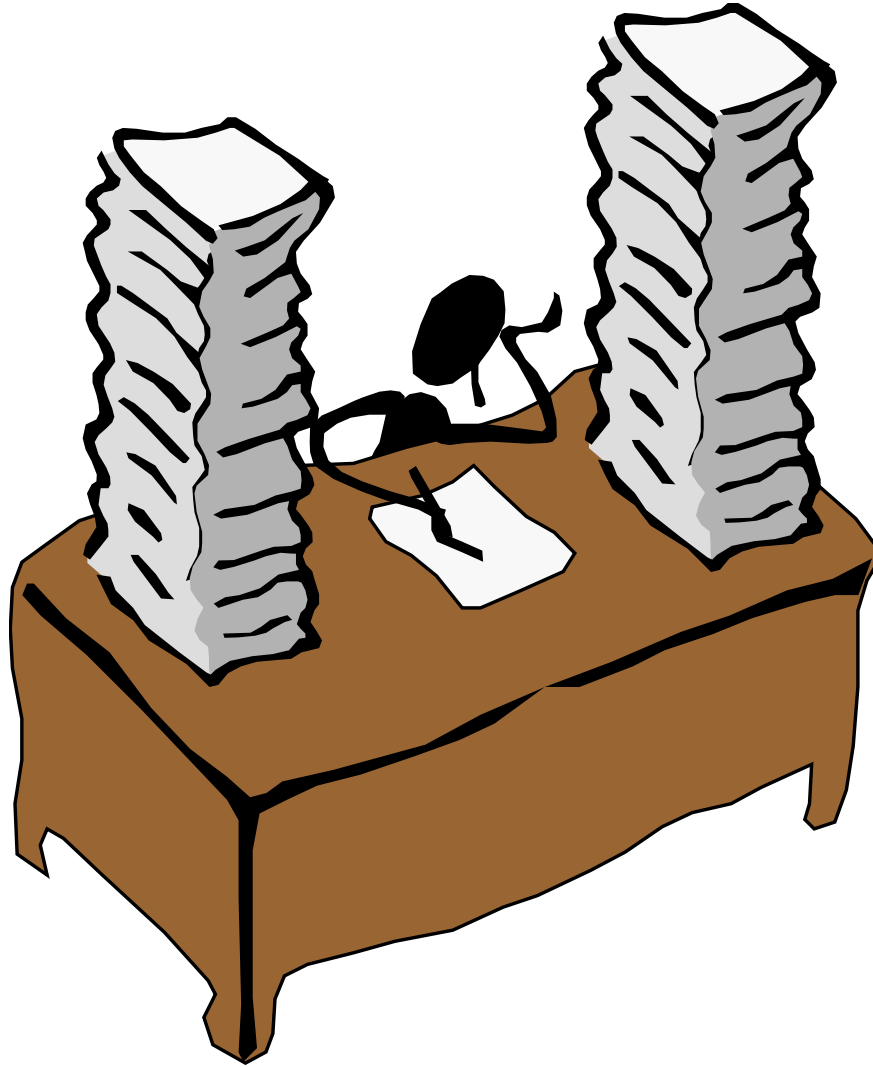
## Steps for Reading to Remember

### Hourly Study Method

1. Read only one paragraph at a time.
2. Read the paragraph once without making any marks.
3. Decide what is important in that particular paragraph and highlight or underline it. Make sure you are not highlighting more than 3 words in a row.
4. Test yourself. Cover it up—no peeking!
5. On to the next paragraph.
6. Repeat testing to make sure you still remember.
7. Do not study for longer than 45-50 minutes without taking a break.



# Stress!





# Stress Management

## **What is Stress?**

Stress is the wear and tear our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment; it has physical and emotional effects on us and can create positive or negative feelings. As a positive influence, stress can help compel us to action; it can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression which in turn can lead to health problems such as headaches, upset stomachs, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. With the death of a loved one, the birth of a child, a job promotion or a new relationship we experience stress as we readjust our lives. In adjusting to different circumstances, stress will help us or hinder us, depending on how we react to it.

## **How can I eliminate stress from my life?**

Positive stress adds anticipation and excitement to life, and we all thrive under a certain amount of stress. Deadlines, competitions, confrontations, and even our frustrations and sorrows add depth and enrichment to our lives. Our goal is not to eliminate stress but to learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us. Insufficient stress acts as a depressant and may leave us feeling bored or dejected; on the other hand, excessive stress may leave us feeling "tied up in knots". What we need to do is find the optimal level of stress which will individually motivate but not overwhelm each of us.

## **How can I tell what is optimal stress for me?**

There is no single level of stress that is optimal for all people. We are all individual creatures with unique requirements. As such, what is distressing to one may be a joy to another. And even when we agree that a particular event is distressing, we are likely to differ in our physiological and psychological responses to it.

The person who loves to arbitrate disputes and moves from jobsite to jobsite would be stressed in a job which was stable and routine, whereas the person who thrives under stable conditions would very likely be stressed on a job where duties were highly varied. Also, our personal stress requirements and the amount which we can tolerate before we become distressed changes with our ages.

It has been found that most illness is related to unrelieved stress. If you are experiencing stress symptoms, you have gone beyond your optimal stress level; you need to reduce the stress in your life and/or improve your ability to manage it.

### **How can I manage stress better?**

Identifying unrelieved stress and being aware of its effect on our lives is not sufficient for reducing its harmful effects. Just as there are many sources of stress, there are many possibilities for its management. However, all require work toward change: changing the source of stress and/or changing your reaction to it. How do you proceed?

#### **1. Become aware of your stressors and your emotional and physical reactions.**

Notice your distress. Don't ignore it. Don't gloss over your problems. Determine what events distress you. What are you telling yourself about the meaning of these events? Determine how your body responds to the stress. Do you become nervous or physically upset--if so, in what specific ways?

#### **2. Recognize what you can change.**

Can you change your stressors by avoiding or eliminating them completely? Can you reduce their intensity (manage them over a period of time instead of on a daily or weekly basis)? Can you shorten your exposure to stress (take a break, leave the physical premises)? Can you devote the time and energy necessary to making a change (goal-setting, time management techniques, and delayed gratification strategies may be helpful here)?

#### **3. Reduce the intensity of your reaction to stress.**

The stress reaction is triggered by your perception of danger; physical danger and/or emotional danger. Are you viewing your stressors in exaggerated terms and/or taking a difficult situation and making it a disaster? Are you expecting to please everyone? Are you overreacting and

viewing everything as absolutely critical and urgent? Do you feel you must always prevail in every situation? Work at adopting more moderate views; try to see the stress as something you cope with rather than something that overpowers you. Try to temper your excess emotions. Put the situation in perspective. Do not labor on the negative aspects and the "what if's".

**4. Learn to moderate your physical reaction to stress.**

Slow, deep breathing will bring your heart and respiration back to normal. Relaxation techniques can reduce muscle tension. Electronic biofeedback can help you gain voluntary control over such things as muscle tension, heart rate and blood pressure. Medications, when prescribed by a physician, can help in the short-term in moderating your physical reactions. However, they alone are not the answer. Learning to moderate these reactions on your own is a preferable long-term solution.

**5. Build your physical reserves.**

Exercise for cardiovascular fitness three to four times a week (moderate, prolonged, rhythmic exercise is best, such as walking, swimming, cycling or jogging). Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals. Maintain your ideal weight. Avoid nicotine, excessive caffeine, and other stimulants. Mix leisure with work. Take breaks and get away when you can. Get enough sleep. Be as consistent with your sleep schedule as possible.

**6. Maintain your emotional reserves.**

Develop some mutually supportive friendships/relationships. Pursue realistic goals which are meaningful to you, rather than goals others have for you that you do not share. Expect some frustrations, failures and sorrows. Always be kind and gentle with yourself - be a friend to yourself.

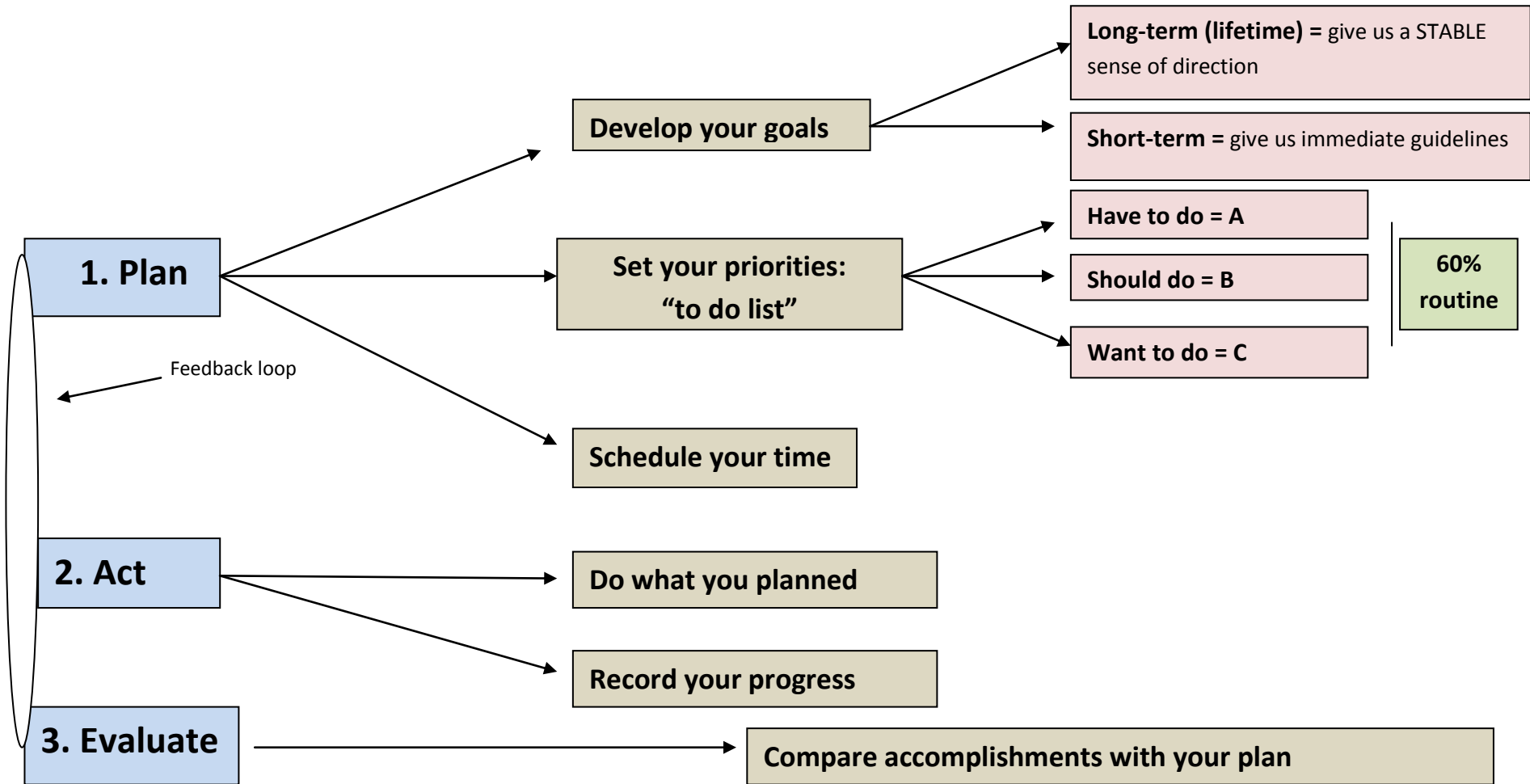


**To sum up...**



# Organize Yourself!

## 3 Major Steps to Self Management



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**This resource was compiled for GPRC students by the Learning Resources Centre  
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**The NAIT Student Counseling Centre**

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