

# PREPARING FOR TESTS AND EXAMS

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Student Services

Well here it is mid-October and Thanksgiving is already behind us. I hope everyone had a great three-day break before heading into the last six weeks of classes. Yes, I know it's hard to believe but we really are into the second half of this Fall 2003 semester.

Many of you are in the midst of the infamous "mid-terms" and many have been writing tests and quizzes on most weeks throughout the term. In December almost all of you will end your semester with the End-of-Term Exams, known traditionally as the Christmas Exams.

Perhaps one or more of the following tips on study strategies, and on changing the talk that can go on in your head may be of some help. (This list is by no means all-inclusive, it highlights some key points.)

Most people commit information more effectively to long-term memory by speaking it aloud. Unfortunately as we get older we tend to think that oral work is only for young children, and that "mature" adults learn silently. Not true. As long as you will not be disturbing others, give it a try. Talking to yourself can really pay off!

Be adventurous and walk around when you're talking through material, especially if you are having difficulty with it. The more active we are in the learning process the better we retain what is learned.

Forming small study groups, in which each individual gets a chance to question, respond, explain, and discuss, can be a great way to put the first two suggestions into action. Some other benefits of study groups: clears up something you didn't understand or maybe even hear in class, but someone else did; reduces day-dreaming; provides an opportunity to socialize, maybe meet someone new.

If you just have not prepared well throughout the term, try to find out which areas of the course are most likely to appear on the exam sheet, and choose some of these areas to cover. Scale down your expectations of what you can achieve, and aim for a different approach next time.

Do not give the grade power over what you think and feel about your-

self. Though the mark may be important for some reasons (e.g. admission into a certain program, retaining a scholarship), it is NEVER the measure of your intrinsic value as a human being. And rarely does one course mark even make a difference in term of program admission or the keeping of a scholarship.

Human effort, genuinely given to learning, has value in itself, whatever the outcome.

Stay with the present. You cannot change the past as it is gone; you cannot live the future for it hasn't arrived. You give away your power to be fully in touch with the material at hand when you are distracted by thoughts of the past, (e.g. I missed four classes) or of the future (e.g. I have 10 chapters in Biology

to study, 12 chapters in Political Studies to cover, three other exams to write . . . ). This is a difficult but extremely important personal and academic skill to develop.

Think of each new piece of information learned, understanding gained, as a deposit to your bank account. While you might prefer to have \$1,000 in the account, \$500 is better than any lesser amount.

Each test, each exam, each assignment is one part of one course, which is one component of one semester, which is one short period in a total program, which is usually about four years in a life span of 70 years plus. It's almost microscopic! So try not to sweat what may in the long run be truly small stuff.

While each test and exam is important, seldom, if ever, is one vital to your educational or career success and never to your personal success and happiness. DO YOUR BEST. BELIEVE IN YOURSELF. YOU CAN DO IT!

**Please do not hesitate to get in touch with either Mike Connolly or myself, counsellors in the Department of Student Services(566-0488), second floor, North End of the WA Murphy Student Centre. If we are unable to help, we will do our best to direct you to someone who can.**

## Undergraduate ESSAY COMPETITION

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