

### Cramming for Tests



It is the night before the exam and you've waited until the last minute. The week was just so busy, and there was no time to effectively study or you simply procrastinated and put it off. You are left with only one option--you'll have to "cram." Fortunately, there are strategies you can use to lead you from absolute panic to being able to calmly take the test.

#### Identify important information

Review your class/lecture notes. Write down the main points that have been presented in class. If your instructor has ever said, "This will be a good exam question," or "I want you to know this material for the test," make sure you add that to your list (highlight it, or put a "TQ" by the material). It may be good to review the textbook and write down main points. However, if the professor has used the text only as reference material, spend the majority of your time reviewing the lecture notes. Use the text for reviewing diagrams, charts, graphs and chapter summaries. *Be very selective in the material you write down.*

#### Make an outline

Organize your list of main points into an outline form. This will help you organize the main points presented in class and in the reading. Recopying the information will also help you remember it better. After you have made your outline, put away all other notes and books. Use only the outline for your review. It is better to over-learn less information than to barely learn a lot of information. Learn less, but learn it better.

#### Review old tests

If your test is comprehensive, review previous tests and quizzes from your class that the professor handed back, placed on reserve or of which you went over with him/her. Study particularly those questions that you or a large portion of the class had difficulty answering. These questions have a habit of being repeated in future tests.

#### Use good test-taking strategies

Get adequate sleep before the exam so that you are as mentally alert as possible during the test. During the test, use good test taking strategies. For example, skip questions you don't know, so you can get to the information that you do know before you forget it. As soon as you get the test, write down hard-to-remember formulas and definitions before you begin. Later, you won't have to be concerned about recalling them. After you have answered the questions that you know, take a deep breath and go back to those you didn't know. Budget your time carefully in order to answer (or at least guess at) every question.

#### Set some new goals

After the test, remind yourself you did your best under these circumstances, regardless of your score. Remember: cramming is merely a survival strategy. It is not an effective way to learn or study. It will, in the long run, hurt your academic success (Don't forget about Boards!). Resolve to budget your time and review better for your next test. **Good Luck!**

