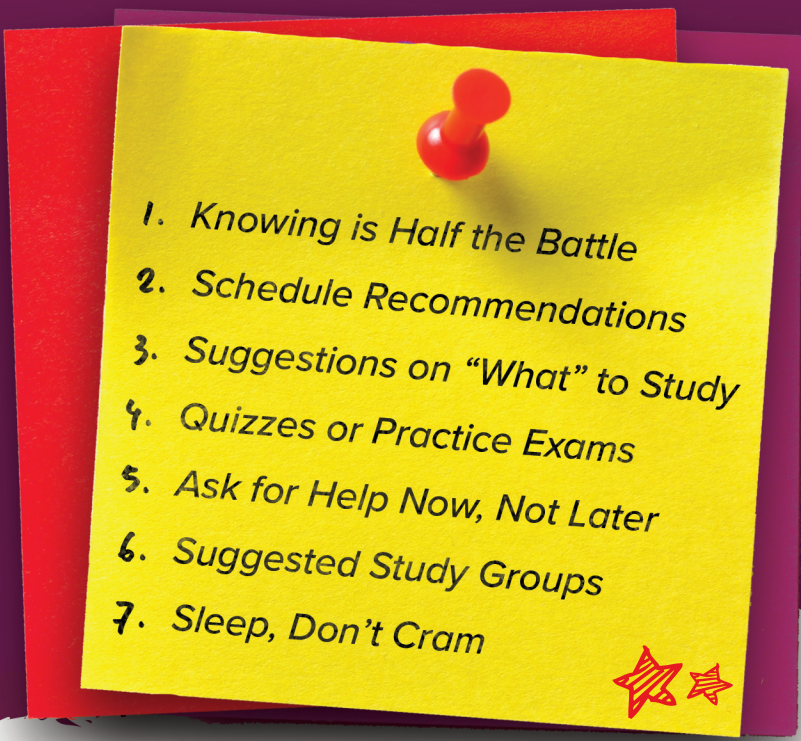


7 Ways to Help Prepare Students for Exams

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1. *Knowing is Half the Battle*
 2. *Schedule Recommendations*
 3. *Suggestions on “What” to Study*
 4. *Quizzes or Practice Exams*
 5. *Ask for Help Now, Not Later*
 6. *Suggested Study Groups*
 7. *Sleep, Don’t Cram*

Here are 7 tips on how to help prepare your students for exams, mid-terms or finals.

1. Knowing is Half the Battle

Students know they have to take a test... right?!

As crazy as it might seem, many students might not know the expectations for assessments your course, particularly if they're freshman, new to your college/university, or first-generation college students. And often, even though it's right there in the syllabus, students don't

realize the implications that a single exam can have on their overall grade and ability to pass the course. So take some time in-class to alert students to what their exams might look like (multiple choice, scantron test, written essay, online-assignment, oral presentation) and how often they will be evaluated. Giving students a heads up about exams, mid-terms or important tests can help set expectations and establish a strong study preparation timeline.

2. Schedule Recommendations

About those study preparations, students are notoriously bad at predicting how much time they should be devoting to studying. Often they think looking at the material a few hours beforehand is enough to refresh their memory and get them a good score. That's called "cramming"...and it doesn't work.

Outline a brief study schedule or review of the assessment material. You can quickly outline which chapters they should study or what material they should review a week or so in advance. When students see how much material will be covered, they are more likely to plan ahead and start their studying earlier.

3. Suggestions on "What" to Study

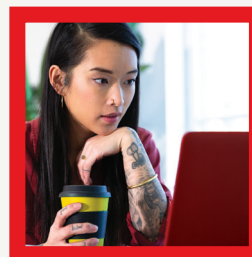
Many students think that studying is just re-reading the textbook chapters. Unless you have an eidetic memory, that's not an effective use of study time. So how do we help students become more effective in their study time?

Tell them exactly where to spend their time.

Instructor recommendations on which topics or material to review, or which specific chapters they should study are incredibly helpful for students. If you have handouts, PPT decks, notes, or classroom assignments that you can put online or hand out in class, give them out to your students as study prep materials.

4. Quizzes or Practice Exams

Do you have any old assessments lying around? Or do you use an online course-management system that will allow you to make practice quizzes? Set up "assessment-like" materials for students to use as a run-through. This will help familiarize them with the content and the conditions they'll face on the real day. Test anxiety is a real thing, and many students who study hard and know the material still perform poorly due to unexpected testing environments. Help lower their anxiety by giving them examples of the real thing prior to the actual assessment.



5. Ask for Help Now, Not Later

Let's face it; all the test prep examples in the world won't help some students magically understand the course material. That's why instructors are still the single greatest classroom and educational resource available to students. The problem, though, is that many students wait until the day before their exam to panic and ask for help.

So beat them to the punch. Establish a protocol throughout the semester of how students can get help. Alert them to your campus' tutoring services (they're free!), or turn your office hours in to exam prep/assessment help – even better ask them to sign up for 1:1 evaluations. Students are more likely to show-up for help if you establish a specific time slot that they're responsible for attending.

The most critical thing is to remind students that asking for help now is perfectly ok and encouraged. Asking for help the day before or a few hours before the test won't do them any good.

6. Suggested Study Groups

Study groups can be extremely helpful for exam preparation. Depending on your course, study groups can be optional or required. But you may want to establish a few study groups that meet after class or online to share notes or work on problems together. To dangle a carrot even further, offer study group participation in exchange for a few extra bonus points.

7. Sleep, Don't Cram

Remind your students that cramming doesn't work. A good night's rest is a critical component of their study prep.

And if all else fails, tell them to sleep with their textbook under their pillow. Maybe we'll prove the theory of learning osmosis after all!

