

# Academic Success Workshop

## Exam Game Plan

The Learning Center  
California State University, Fresno



Courtesy of: the Learning Center at California State University, Fresno

# Objectives

- To understand the goal of examinations
- Become familiar with different exam formats
- Learn different examination strategies
- Learn how to apply different examination strategies
- Discuss test anxiety and ways to overcome it.

# Goal of Examinations

- The goal of examinations is to assess the level of knowledge learned in a particular subject.
- To be a successful student, begin preparing for the exam on the first day of class.

# Exam Formats

- Multiple Choice
- Take Home
- Open Book/Open Note
- Short Answer
- Essay (or Bluebook)
- Fill in the Blank

# Exam Strategies

## ■ Thematic Study Strategy

- Organizing course material into topics or themes can help you store information into long-term memory.
- To select themes for the thematic study strategy:
  - Think about how and why the material was covered in the order it was presented.
  - Focus on the progression of ideas in a textbook.
  - Study relationships.
  - Do not let facts and details hide the important questions, issues, and problems.

# Exam Strategies, cont.

- Flashcards help store information into your LTM and build your vocabulary.
- Write down key terms or other important information on one side of the card.
- Then write down definitions or other information on the other side of the card.
- Consider using color-coded flashcards.

# Exam Strategies, cont.

- You can also prepare by organizing and facilitating study groups with classmates:
  1. Get contact information from students interested in attending your study group.
  2. Decide on a day, time, and location for the meetings.
  3. Have each member take turns at teaching and presenting information to the group.

# Exam Strategies, cont.

- Practice exams are extremely useful.
- Remember you are training for the exam game:
  - Develop your own practice test of the materials.
  - Time yourself as you complete the practice test.
  - Grade your test and identify your strengths and your weaknesses
  - Determine what you still need to study.

# Review Plan

- Review at least one week before the test.
  - Plan for extra preparation time outside of regular study times
- Break the material into logical study sections—i.e. thematic study.
  - Plan to study specific parts during set study times rather than trying to go through all the material at each study period.
- Review all materials the night before the test.

# Review Plan

- Identify what to study.
  - Textbook chapters, lecture notes, supplementary materials or instructor's handouts, class assignments and/or homework assignments, previous tests and quizzes.
- Combine study methods to find what works for you

# Review Plan

- Assess your preparedness.
  - Study only what you don't know rather than continuing to review what you do know.
- Create a practice exam by anticipating what topics will be addressed on the real exam.
  - This will help identify the topics that need additional study.

# Application

## ■ Think Critically

- Pull the ideas together and determine the similarities and differences.

## ■ Make Value Judgments

- Assess the value or worth of the information presented.
- Challenge the accuracy, long-term value, and importance of the materials.

## Application, cont.

- Develop an overall test-day routine for college.
- Bring all necessary tools.
  - Pencil, pen, calculator, scantron, blue book, etc.
- Arrive ~5 minutes early.
- Arrive confident.
- Anticipate test anxiety.

## Application, cont.

- Read and follow all directions carefully.
- Leave **NOTHING** blank.
- Look for clues in other questions.
- Write answers clearly and legibly.
- Check your answers.
- Don't second guess yourself.
  - Go with your first instinct unless you are absolutely certain you made a mistake.

# Application, cont.

- ◆ Read and consider all choices before deciding on an answer.
- ◆ Read combination choices carefully.
- ◆ Use logic and common sense.
- ◆ Closely examine items that are very similar.

# Application, cont.

- Pay attention to qualifying words:
  - Best, always, all, no, none, never, entirely, completely, every, etc.
  - These words do not allow for any exceptions.
  - Words that allow for exceptions are often, usually, less, seldom, few, more, most, etc.

# Application, cont.

- If you are uncertain of the answer on multiple choice questions, use **strategic guessing**:
  - Eliminate extreme answers with words such as always, never, all, none, etc.
  - In-between answers with words such as often, seldom, probably, are usually a good choice.
  - If you see an answer that seems out of place it's probably incorrect.
  - If two answers are completely opposite - usually one is correct.
  - If a part of a statement is false the whole answer is false.

# Test Anxiety

- Text anxiety is a LEARNED response to the testing situation. Since it is a learned response, it can be changed.
- Test anxiety only becomes bad when it interferes with a student's normal performance in the testing situation.

# Overcoming Test Anxiety

- To overcome test anxiety
  - 1) get used to the testing situation
    - a) become familiar with the building and room where the test will be given.
    - b) develop and complete as many practice tests as possible.
    - c) practice working in time limits –time your practice tests. Condition yourself to overcome timer phobia.

# Overcoming Test Anxiety

- Control negative feelings, thoughts and actions.
  - 1) Avoid self-doubt, worry, and negative thinking.
  - 2) Be positive– be your own cheerleader.
  - 3) Keep a clear perspective – this is just one test. It is not the end of the universe!
  - 4) Face your worst fears- if you fail, what will happen?

# Overcoming Test Anxiety

- ◆ Be good to yourself physically
  - ◆ Get adequate sleep
  - ◆ Get good nutrition
    - ◆ Coffee doesn't count! It will make you jittery rather than alert, which will add to anxiety.
  - ◆ Get sufficient exercise

# Overcoming Test Anxiety

- Practice relaxation techniques:
  - Deep breathing
  - Muscle relaxation
  - Guided meditation