**Exam Tip Sheet**

**Key Study Planning Tips**

* Aim for a sustainable study schedule. It’s like training for a marathon; every day makes a difference.
* The two-hour breaks are essential. They allow your brain to consolidate the information you’ve been rehearsing, and allow you to relax, eat, and exercise.
* Try to schedule study blocks at the same time of day that the course’s exam is scheduled.
* Study for two or three courses in a day.
* Maximize your memory by distributing, for example, 15 hours of study over five or six days, rather than over two or three days.
* Study the hardest material during your peak learning times.
* Build in down time.

Try *not* to study nine hours each day. It’s OK not to study every available minute!

**Multiple Choice Questions**

* Read and answer the question before reading the choices. Then select the best option. Several options may have correct elements.
* Begin by answering all the questions you know in the exam booklet.
* Code the answers you don’t know: **?** for the ones you need more time for and **X** for the ones you have no idea about.
* Return to **?** questions first, then **X** questions if the time permits.

**Take-home exams**

* Know the professor’s expectations. Check the course syllabus.
* Demonstrate your understanding of the course content by applying, analyzing, or evaluating–not just repeating facts.
* Flag important content in your textbook and notes.
* Know where you can find resources (e.g., library, websites).
* Prepare exam aids, such as formula sheets, ahead of time.
* Reduce distractions while writing the exam.
* Take short breaks as time allows.

**Essay exams**

* Your argument should be organized, clear, concise, accurate, and relevant to the question.
* Brainstorm. Jot down key concepts, theories, facts, or themes.
* Outline your essay before you start writing.
* Include one main idea per paragraph. Offer evidence and interpretation.
* Start and finish with strong opening and closing statements. Write these last.
* This is not the time to fuss over choosing the right word. Answer the question as well as you can, then move on.

**Short answer exams**

* Start with a strong, focused topic sentence.
* Use a simple organizational structure: point, evidence or example, and interpretation.
* Add a summary sentence to recap if applicable.

**During the exam**

Having a plan for how you’ll tackle an exam can make a big difference. Here are some things to try.

* Aim to **stay calm and relaxed** so you can think. Here are some [**strategies to try**](http://sass.queensu.ca/test-anxiety/).
* Jot down **how much time** you think you’ll need for each set of questions. Stick to your planned time budget as much as possible.
* **Read instructions and questions carefully.**
  + Read each question at least twice before you answer it. Many students lose marks because they rush to answer questions and misread them.
  + Watch for qualifying words such as “not,” “some,” or “most of the time.”
* **Do a memory dump.** Jot down any information you’re worried you’ll forget before answering any questions.
* **Do the questions you know first** to build confidence.
* **Review your answers** before handing in your exam to catch mistakes, and ensure you’ve answered questions thoroughly and clearly.

**After the exam**

* Take a break; get some exercise and food, take a nap, etc.
* Try not to do the exam post-mortem; You cannot change what you have written so don’t dwell on it.
* If you have more exams to write, follow your study schedule.
* If you don’t have more exams to write, enjoy some time off from school.
* Once your prof has marked your exam, go look at it. Figure out what you did well, and where you went wrong, so you can do better next time.