



Part 1 – AVOIDING EXAM ANXIETY

Exam Anxiety Tip 1

Be Prepared Early

The most common cause of exam anxiety is lack of preparation for the exam. Set up a study schedule early (at least three weeks before your first exam is ideal). You may find that you actually need to start studying very early due to other commitments. Planning ahead also assists you to avoid cramming which can be a major cause of exam anxiety.

Exam Anxiety Tip 2

Sleep Well

Regular sleep is one of the best ways to control stress. Getting up and going to bed each day at the same times ensures that your body and brain are getting the rest they need for optimal functioning. Students who follow a regular sleeping pattern have been shown to perform 30% better than students who stay up late or get up early to study.

Exam Anxiety Tip 3

Same Caffeine & Sugar Intake

Keep caffeine and sugar intake the same during exam time. Don't increase or decrease the amount of coffee, tea or cola that you normally drink as your body and brain are accustomed to getting a certain amount. Keep things in your life as stable as possible, especially during exam time.

Exam Anxiety Tip 4

Learned Relaxed Breathing

When you display any symptoms of anxiety during studying or during the exam, use relaxed breathing to calm yourself. Take your attention away from the task and take a few slow breaths. Say to yourself, "calm and relaxed" as you exhale. Practice relaxed breathing before the exam.

Exam Anxiety Tip 5

Don't Study the Night Before

Studying the night before an exam causes your anxiety level to increase. Unfortunately, it doesn't decrease when you go to sleep. Reduce anxiety by taking the evening off to relax – watch TV, see a movie, read a novel, etc.

Exam Anxiety Tip 6

Review Main Themes

If it causes you anxiety NOT to study the night before an exam, review the main themes of the course earlier in the day. Of course, that implies that you should have already studied well.

Exam Anxiety Tip 7

Have a Plan before the Exam

As part of your studying, think about how you will approach the exam, and what you will do when you run into trouble. Having a plan in place helps you to worry less and to concentrate more on passing.

Exam Anxiety Tip 8

Aim to Do Your Best

Often, students start thinking negatively when things aren't going well on an exam. This can lead to lower self-confidence and increased self-doubt. Recognize and turn off your negative internal dialogue. Focus on the task instead of on yourself. Do not try for perfection – aim to do your very best.

from Tips for Reducing Exam Anxiety - Academic Support Centre - University of Alberta. (n.d.). Retrieved November 9, 2010, from <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/academicsupport/nav03.cfm?nav03=52237&nav02=50367&nav01=27013>



Part 2 – SIZING UP YOUR EXAM

TYPES OF EXAM QUESTIONS

Many university exams consist of a wide variety of different types of questions ranging from easy (recognition level of Bloom's taxonomy) to hard (creation in Bloom's taxonomy). It is important to know the types of questions which will be included on the exam (make sure to ask your professor!) and practice answering those types of questions with varying degrees of difficulty. The next section of this workshop goes through the following types of exam questions and provides you with some tips and strategies to use when answering them: *multiple choice*, *true-false*, *short answer* and *essay* questions.

Multiple Choice Questions

Multiple choice questions are considered to be an objective form of assessment and are very popular for many professors because they are quick and easy to mark. These types of questions can be tricky though so make sure you read through the *entire* question first before circling your answer. Multiple choice questions consist of a "stem" which is the introductory questions or incomplete statement at the beginning of each item. The "stem" is then followed by the option. Options consist of the correct option and "distractors" which are the incorrect options.

Tips ...

- ☑ Read the entire question thoroughly first and make sure you understand what is being asked
- ☑ Try to answer the question before looking at the given answers (your first instinct is usually right!)
- ☑ Ask yourself how many correct answers are there? Do the recitations say choose the correct answer or the BEST answer?
- ☑ Answer the questions you know first – mark the ones you are unsure of and come back to them
- ☑ Take questions at face value – don't get caught up looking for tricks (professors aren't that mean!)
- ☑ Watch for double meanings within the sentence structure of the question
- ☑ Pay attention to absolutes in the answer – "never" or "all", these are usually distractors which can deter you away from the correct option
- ☑ Options that contain unfamiliar terms are usually distractors



When In Trouble ...

- ☑ **GUESS**
 - If 2 answers are similar, have similar words, or have opposite meanings then choose one of them
 - When in doubt – choose the longest answer
- ☑ Rephrase the question in your own words
- ☑ Underline **KEY** words
- ☑ Look for answers in other test questions
- ☑ Cross out the answers you are absolutely sure are incorrect
- ☑ Never leave a question unanswered, unless there is a penalty for incorrect answers

Sample Multiple Choice Question

There tends to be two types of multiple choice questions – short and long. There are examples of each and even if you don't know the right answer use the techniques you have learned about to try to answer them!

1. (*short type*) Which membranous organelle is considered to be the powerhouse of the cell?
 - A. Chloroplast
 - B. Lysosome
 - C. Peroxisome
 - D. Mitochondria
 - E. All of the above

2. (*long type*) Which of the following is correct?
 - i. ATP is hydrolyzed at the end of the electron transport chain
 - ii. In a living cell, all reactions are at equilibrium
 - iii. ATP can provide energy to drive other reactions
 - iv. Like in a mitochondrion, there is one proton pump in the thylakoid of the chloroplast
 - A. i only
 - B. ii only
 - C. iii only
 - D. iv only
 - E. ii and iv only



True – False Questions

These questions can range in difficulty and although they appear easy to many students, professors are known to slip in tricks. For example, instead of simply circling the right answer you might have to rewrite the statement in the correct format to receive full marks.

Tips ...

- ☑ There are generally more true questions than false questions
- ☑ Look for qualifiers (*all, most, sometimes, rarely*) because more often questions containing qualifiers are “TRUE”
- ☑ Answers with *always* or *never* in the statement are usually false
- ☑ Tentative words leave room for exceptions and tend to be true, such as *seldom, sometimes, often, most, generally*)
- ☑ If ANY part of the statement is FALSE, then the whole thing is FALSE
- ☑ Watch out for negatives or negative prefixes because they can confuse you as to what the question is actually asking you

Sample True or False Question: Cancer is the #1 killer in Canada.

Short Answer Questions

These questions tend to be a little higher up on Bloom’s taxonomy of thinking and require you to actually verbalize in writing your answer to a question. When writing these types of answers ensure that you restate the key words included in the question into your answer and give direct, concise answers.

Tips ...

- ☑ Look for grammatical hints (ie. a sentence beginning with “an” indicates that the word belonging starts with a vowel)
- ☑ Use the BEST word or phrase you can think of
- ☑ Pay attention to the allocation of marks per question. This will give you hints on how long or short your answer needs to be
- ☑ Keep it short and sweet (K.I.S.S rule applies!)
- ☑ Diagrams can often be helpful if you are struggling to verbalize your thoughts

Sample Short Answer Question: Name the three factors that affect health and wellness?



Essay Questions

Tips ...

- ☑ Read the entire exam first and estimate the time allotted per question based on the point allocation per question
- ☑ Keep the person who will be marking your paper happy – make your essay easy to read (use pen, double space and write legibly on one side of the paper)
- ☑ Answer the easiest question first, this builds your confidence!
- ☑ Read the directions carefully and do exactly what the questions ask
- ☑ Plan your answer in advance – create a mini-outline including all the main points to be covered so that if you run out of time your work is still shown
- ☑ Get right to the point – don't be fooled, a longer answer doesn't necessarily mean more points
- ☑ If there is more than 1 essay question brainstorm each one first before writing
- ☑ Pay attention to the TYPE of question (ie. *compare, discuss, contrast, prove, describe etc*)
- ☑ If you run out of time, plan the rest of your response in point form

Sample Strategy for Essay Questions and Exams

LAB B²OWL Structure – This is a strategy you can use and follow for writing essay exams.

L – Look over the entire exam before you begin. Read the directions, underline testing words and circle questions you do not fully understand.

A – Ask for point allocation if it isn't given and don't spend the same amount of time on each question if it varies.

B – Budget your time based on the point allocation for each question and make a tentative time schedule before you begin.

B – Begin with the easiest question to increase confidence and get warmed up for the rest of the exam.

B – Begin each answer with a thesis or topic sentence. This is a quick way to restate the essay questions in a sentence that helps to focus your answer.

O – Outline each question before you begin on a pre-essay page labeled as such and create a quick outline of your question (*This will impress your professor or TA that is grading your exam!*)

W – Watch for key testing words.

L – Look over your exam once before you turn it in!



KEY WORDS FOR UNDERSTANDING ESSAY QUESTIONS

Here is a quick list of those key words that can be included in essay questions that you need to pay particular attention to before you start formulating your answer.

Analyze	Means to find the main ideas and show how they are related and why they are important.
Comment on	Means to discuss, criticize, or explain its meaning as completely as possible.
Compare	Emphasize similarities, but differences may be mentioned
Contrast	Stress differences
Criticize	Express your judgment as to the correctness or merit of the matters under consideration.
Define	Make a clear statement including all items which belong within the category you are defining, but excluding all items which do not belong.
Describe	Characterize the item from several points of view. (Sometimes this question may begin with the word "What")
Diagram	Means to make a graph, chart, or drawing. Be sure you label it and add a brief explanation if it is needed.
Discuss	Outline the item completely, paying special attention to organization. Present pros and cons and illustrative details.
Enumerate	Means to list. Name and list the main ideas one by one. Number them.
Evaluate	Means to give your opinion or some expert's opinion of the truth or importance of the concept. Tell the advantages and disadvantages.
Explain	This is similar to "discussing" but there should be greater emphasis on "how" and "why".
Illustrate	Means to explain or make it clear by concrete examples, comparisons or analogies.
Interpret	Means to give the meaning using examples and personal comments to make it clear.
Justify	Prove, or show the grounds for your conclusions. Try to present your evidence in a convincing form, (Sometimes, this appears as a "Why" or a "Prove" question.)
List	Name the items briefly, one after the other.
Outline	Summarize in the form of a series of headings and sub-headings.



Part 3 – TAKE ACTION

CREATING YOUR OWN PERSONALIZED STUDY PLAN

Study Location: Consider the following questions about your ideal study location.

1. *Where do you study best?*
2. *What is the environment like?*
3. *What are some potential distractors that might take your focus away from studying?*
4. *How can you eliminate those distractors?*

Example answers:

1. *I study best in the Woodward IRC library.*
2. *It is chilly most of the time, which helps keep me awake but I always pack a sweater and toque. Woodward seems quieter and less busy than other places on campus and the newly renovated Garden level is now open. I also sometimes study in the bottom of Koerner, but it can be hard to find a spot. I've just heard the Irving K. Barber Centre has 24/7 study hours during exams too!! I plan to check out <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/get-together/find-a-space/> for more possibilities.*
3. *I find it tough when I want to grab a coffee or a snack and I don't want to lose my study spot. Sometimes I get distracted and don't make it back afterward.*
4. *I need to start packing a thermos/water bottle and some granola bars, etc. so I don't end my study sessions earlier than planned. I also find I need to turn off my phone and email notifier so I'm not constantly checking these.*



CREATING YOUR OWN PERSONALIZED STUDY PLAN

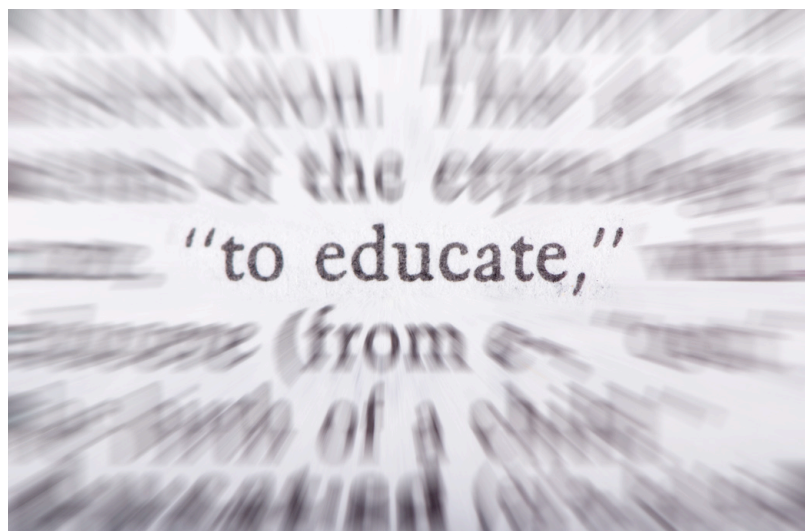
Course	Date of Exam	Type of Exam (<i>essay, multiple-choice, etc.</i>)	Current Grade	Desired Grade	% Exam is Worth	% Needed on Exam	Study Details (<i>group vs. solo study, tutor needed, # study hours, etc.</i>)



TO DO LIST

- Gather all materials needed for studying ASAP to make sure you aren't missing anything.
- Find copies of old exams whenever possible.
 - Check your course website, ask your prof or TA, classmates, etc.
 - Math exams. <http://www.math.ubc.ca/Ugrad/pastExams/>
 - Physics exams. <https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/11225>
 - Chemistry or Biology exams. The Science club often sells exam packages for ~\$10.
 - Prep101 <http://www.prep101.com/book.php?school=13> (Please note: This organization is not directly affiliated with the university so check for instructor names and dates to be sure these are a good reflection of current UBC courses).
- Find out as much as you can about the format of your exam (types of questions, length, choices? etc.). It's appropriate to ask your profs/TAs if your exam:
 - is cumulative?
 - is based on lectures, the text, other readings?
 - includes choices? (i.e. choose 2 of 5 questions)
 - has short answer, essay, multiple-choice questions?
 - provides important additional material? (i.e. formulae for math/science exams)
- Create a study plan including where and when you plan to study. Be realistic!
- Complete and condense your summary notes. Break it down into manageable chunks and set a timeline for getting this done ASAP.
- Quiz yourself (or with a partner) to practice answering potential exam questions.
- Remember to schedule in some time for breaks, exercise, rest and regular meals to reduce anxiety and keep you well fueled for the work ahead.

GOOD LUCK ON YOUR EXAMS!!





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**Also check out the Exam Prep Study Toolkit. UBC Learning Commons.
<http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/get-started/study-toolkits/exam-prep-toolkit/>