

Matching your studying to your exam question types

Multiple choice exams

What to study?

For explicit comprehension questions, focus on memorizing terms, definitions, facts, and concepts that can be stated in a succinct way.

For application questions, practice applying the concepts and/ or procedures to new situations. Think deeper and focus on the Big Picture (this takes longer than basic comprehension questions).

How to study?

Study in short blocks (20-30 minutes with a 5-10 minute break) over many days. Review daily. Answer the study guide.

Essay exams

What to study?

Focus on the major themes of the course to get the Big Picture: think deeply to understand how the main ideas and details are related. Elaborate, compare, evaluate the materials. Generate possible exam questions and answer them in writing (or if you don't have time, make a detailed outline for each).

How to study?

Use mindmaps and graphic organizers which organize around the central theme. Study in longer blocks (e.g. 2.5 hours: 50 minutes, 10 minutes break, 50 more minutes). Start far enough ahead of the exam for the information to 'percolate' in your mind.

Problem-type exams

What to study?

Focus on solving problems and identifying the underlying concepts. Try to see a pattern, i.e. look for problems that cluster around the same theme, in order to reduce the number of problems you will need to do. Practice by answering old exams, test, labs, and homework questions.

How to study?

Allow for long study sessions and breaks (2 hours with a 30 minute break).