Rules for organizing your study schedule

Get organized: use organizing tools such as monthly and weekly calendars, "to-do" lists. Organizing tools can be found in our online module Managing Your Time At University.

Start studying EARLY. Decide how many days before the exam you need in order to gather and use information (see Review & Self-testing). Extend your study over as many days as you can manage. The longer you extend this period, the more time you have to review and self-test rather than cramming vast amounts of information into several long, exhausting days.

Let's see how it works...

Imagine you have 12 hours to "study" for a particular exam.

With the cramming approach: you spend 2 days at 6 hours, totalling 12 hours of study. You have little time to review or self-test because you are busy just preparing the material. Everything is in short-term memory i.e. easily dumped out of your brain.

With the non-cramming approach: you spread the 12 hours over 6 days at 2 hours per day. This allows for preparing, reviewing (gather and use), and SLEEPING ON IT! While you sleep, you are still thinking but at a different level of consciousness. You are now learning the materials versus temporarily housing them.

So...

- Set aside study blocks of approximately 2.5 hours per subject area per day.

- Add regular, daily review and self-testing to the schedule. Ideally start with reviewing information covered the day before and end with a self-test.

- Include other requisite tasks: sleeping, eating, exercising, relaxing, self-care. Now more than ever, it is important for you to take very good care of your health. Getting a full nights sleep, eating balanced meals and doing daily cardio activity will stimulate your brain and help you think and focus better.

- Make the schedule as routine as you can. E.g. go to bed at the same time every night, especially during exam study period.

 Finally...

Follow your schedule! Do not let time bandits (including your friends!) sway you.