

The 5-Day Study Plan

Why should I start studying early?

Did you know that the human brain learns academic material faster and better if done in brief blocks of time spread over longer periods, rather than in a few lengthy sessions?

For example, you will perform better on an exam if you spend one hour studying each day for 20 days than if you spend 10 hours studying for two days before an exam. Which means that CRAMMING is BAD NEWS!

What if I have to cram?

Ok, so sometimes life gets crazy and we end up having to cram, right? If you have to cram, try to focus on remembering the information you know already rather than trying to learn new information. And here's the kicker: you will typically NOT remember what you tried to learn the night before the exam, so it's best to make sure you really know some of the information well. If you do have a few days, try to spread the studying out so you are not doing it all in one day.

How should I plan my exam preparation?

The 5-Day Study Plan

If you plan ahead, many students have found the "5 Day Study Plan" gets good results. However, five days is really the minimal and we recommend a much longer study plan, if possible. For example, if you have not read any of your BIOL 101 textbook and a multiple choice quiz of over 100 test questions is looming, 5 days will probably not suffice.

Components of the 5-Day Study Plan:

- Space out your learning over a minimum of 5 days.
- Divide your material into workable 'chunks,' e.g. a chapter, a set of lecture notes.
- During each day, prepare a new chunk. Preparing might be reading and note-taking, amalgamating lecture and textbook information, reorganizing lecture notes.
- Review previous material.
- Use active learning strategies such as questioning, reciting, cue cards, study groups, etc.
- Use self-testing techniques to monitor your learning.

How much time should I set aside to study?

You might need a minimum of 8-10 hours of studying to get a good mark on an exam. However, the time you need to spend really depends on many things such as:

- the difficulty of the course
- to what extent you have kept up with the materials during the term
- how important this exam is to you

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How to make a 5-Day Study Plan

1. Break your material into chunks. If it can be divided by chapter, article, theme or topic, then use that. If not, divide the material in a way that is manageable to you. For example, if one chapter is very long and/or complex, break the chapter into sections.
2. Plan to spend 2.5-3 hours studying on each of the five (or more) days.
3. Each day start by reviewing the previous day's work, focusing on what you did **not** know on the self-test, and then preparing a new section. End with a self-test.

Example time frame:

Date	What to do	What to study	Length of time
Day 1	Prepare	1 st section/chunk (e.g. a chapter)	2 hours
	Self-test		20 minutes
Day 2	Review	1 st section	20 minutes
	Prepare Self-test	2 nd section	2 hours 20 minutes
Day 3	Review	1 st section	10 minutes
	Review	2 nd section	20 minutes
	Prepare Self-test	3 rd section	2 hours 20 minutes
Day 4	Review	1 st section	5 minutes
	Review	2 nd section	10 minutes
	Review	3 rd section	20 minutes
	Prepare Self-test	4 th section	2 hours 20 minutes
Day 5	Review	1 st section	5 minutes
	Review	2 nd section	5 minutes
	Review	3 rd section	10 minutes
	Review	4 th section	20 minutes
	Self-test		2 hours

You may need to extend the preparation time depending on the information and to match your own learning pace. However, studying for more than 3-4 hours at one session is **not** as helpful as several shorter ones.

Also, don't forget to take short breaks throughout!

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