



EXAMINATIONS

Success on any examination is a two-step process. First, you must prepare properly so that information is in your head in a meaningful form and accessible during the exam. Second, you must discipline yourself to think carefully while reading and evaluating test questions. Your exam preparation should begin well in advance of the exam itself. Ideally, you should be studying lecture material on a regular basis, i.e., 2 to 3 times weekly throughout the pre-exam period so that very little in the way of studying is actually necessary immediately prior to the exam itself. As part of this preparation process, you should:

- Complete all assigned readings and take good lecture notes.
- Learn material in accordance with lecture objectives and other guidelines.
- Practice applying your knowledge with sample exam questions.
- Write key concepts on note cards for frequent review.
- Be sure to have your questions about unclear topics answered.
- Attend any review sessions offered by the professor.
- Study enough in advance to avoid the need for all-night cram sessions.
- Get a good night's sleep and be well-rested for the examination.

Question Types and Examination Formats

In your college career you will doubtless encounter several styles of examinations, ranging from all multiple choice to short answer and long essays. Regardless of the exam format, however, to be successful you must be well prepared and think carefully. Since multiple choice exams seem to pose a particular problem for students, let's concentrate on how best to approach this type of examination.

Because of the large size of many courses, questions tend to be predominantly multiple choice in format, although short answers and essays are also used in some cases. Despite what you may have heard about multiple choice questions being "picky" or "too specific," professors try very hard to avoid this problem. In fact, many of the multiple choice questions on exams can be thought provoking and thorough in their scope.

For this reason, you must learn to read and think very carefully while taking multiple choice tests. There are a number of strategies for training yourself to be a careful thinker on exams, and you should feel free to use whatever method works best for you. One proven method is to employ this simple three-step technique:

1. Read the question completely and carefully.
2. Think about your answer before looking at the possible choices.
3. Evaluate each choice critically before selecting the best answer.

Information provided by: Dr. Jerry A. Waldvogel, Dept. of Biology Instruction & Agricultural @Clemson University