Final Exam Preparation Tips

One important factor that will influence the outcome of final exams is a student’s frame of mind. So, start with a positive attitude and psych yourself up to succeed.

Find out what you can about the test:
- Listen closely as your teacher describes the test and reviews material.
- Read the course syllabus since it will contain information about the final exam and how much of your total semester grade the final is worth.
- Reviewing prior tests in the course targets and study guides will help you know what material to focus on for the final and help you prepare.

Set up a study schedule:
- Final exams are not a surprise! You know about them in advance and should be studying throughout the semester for them.
- When it comes to studying, start early and start small. In the final weeks or month before finals, analyze your study needs for each class. As you move closer to the final, increase the length and depth of your review.
- Set up regular study sessions for each class. Dedicate one day for final exam preparation per subject each week, i.e. Math on Mondays.
- Review course materials (i.e. notes, old homework assignments, vocabulary, study guides and the book) to help you prepare.
- Maximize your learning style: audio people recite, hands-on people write, visual people draw, or use all of the learning modes, esp. for your most difficult subjects.
- Take advantage of opportunities for extra help from your teacher and NCHS academic resources! If your teacher offers review sessions, be sure to attend.
- To check your understanding of key concepts, you may want to try doing, explaining, teaching, demonstrating and quizzing yourself. The purpose of these study methods is to emphasize that LEARNING IS ACTIVE, NOT PASSIVE!
- Phrase each concept that might appear on the final exam in terms of an action verb. For example, it’s not enough in a calculus class to say “Understand the Chain Rule”. Rephrase this as “Calculate derivatives of a function using the Chain Rule”. If you can do that task repeatedly, accurately and with confidence, then you’re ready.
- Do a calm, relaxed and brief review just before bed the night before a final to let your subconscious aid in long-term memory. You shouldn’t need to cram!
- Go to bed early and get a good night’s sleep.

Control your concentration:
- Choose a place to study where you will not be interrupted.
- Eliminate distractions. Turn off your cell phone and log off of IM, Facebook, etc.
- Study in groups only if it is helpful to you and not a distraction.

On the day of the Final Exam:
- Eat a good breakfast. The ideal is a combination of protein and complex carbohydrates – don’t eat junk food!
- Get to your classroom a little ahead of time. Don’t listen others stress about the final in the hallway! Instead, do a little deep-breathing or visualization to calm yourself!
- Listen carefully to instructions the teacher gives and read directions carefully.
- Read every word in the test question.
- Plan your time. Attempt to answer all of the questions. Skip questions you don’t know, answering those you are sure of, then go back to the ones you skipped.
- Double-check your work for errors before turning in the exam.