



Exam Study Skills and Preparation

MULTILINGUAL STUDENT SUPPORT (MSS)
CAMOSUN COLLEGE

Contents

- Studying for an exam
 - *Learn the details*
 - *Learn the expectations*
 - *Plan how you will study*
 - *Practice and teach*
- Preparing to write the exam
 - *Test traps to avoid*
 - *Before the test*
 - *During the test*
 - *After you get it back*



Studying for an Exam

Make a plan and start early

Exam Details and Expectations

Learn the details of the exam

How much is it worth?

What kinds of questions will be on it?

- *short-answer, multiple-choice, etc.*

What topics will it cover?

How long will it be?

What should you bring? Is it **open book**?

"Open book"

means students can refer to textbooks, course notes, and other approved materials *during* the exam.

Ask your instructor which materials you can use.

Exam Details and Expectations

Learn the expectations of the instructor

Will the exam test lower- or higher-level thinking?

- *Lower-level thinking* = Basic knowledge and comprehension
- *Higher-level thinking* = Application, analysis, evaluation, or synthesis

Exam Language

Lower-level thinking verbs in exam questions

- *choose*: select the best option from a group of possible answers
- *define*: write the exact meaning of a word or phrase – keep it short
- *identify*: name/select/recognize
- *label*: write the names of specific terms/parts on a graph, chart, diagram, etc.
- *list*: present in an ordered way (may use numbers or bullets)

Exam Language

Higher-level thinking verbs in exam questions

- *analyze*: divide something into parts and show how they work together to produce the overall result or pattern
- *apply*: use what you know on a new problem
- *discuss*: present all viewpoints of a topic; compare & contrast; share the **pros & cons**

“pros & cons”

are the advantages and disadvantages of something; arguments for and against

Exam Language

Higher-level thinking verbs in exam questions

- *explain*: make clear the meaning, purpose, details of, or the justification for
- *evaluate*: make a judgement based on evidence using your own perspective
- *synthesize*: create something new; propose alternatives

Plan How You Will Study

Which material do you know well and which material do you find difficult? Spend more time on what you find difficult.

- Include study blocks in your daily and weekly plans.
- List the topics to be covered on the exam.
- Review what you know well to boost your confidence and to make connections with overall concepts.
- Take a practice exam before the real exam and note which questions you struggled with and which questions you got wrong.
- Schedule more time for these difficult questions and areas.

Practice and Teach Others

Try these two effective learning strategies!

1. *Practice*: Create exam questions

- Focus on the vital information and key concepts
- Predict incorrect responses and understand why they are wrong
- Write questions like the types of questions from previous exams

Practice makes perfect.

-
English Proverb

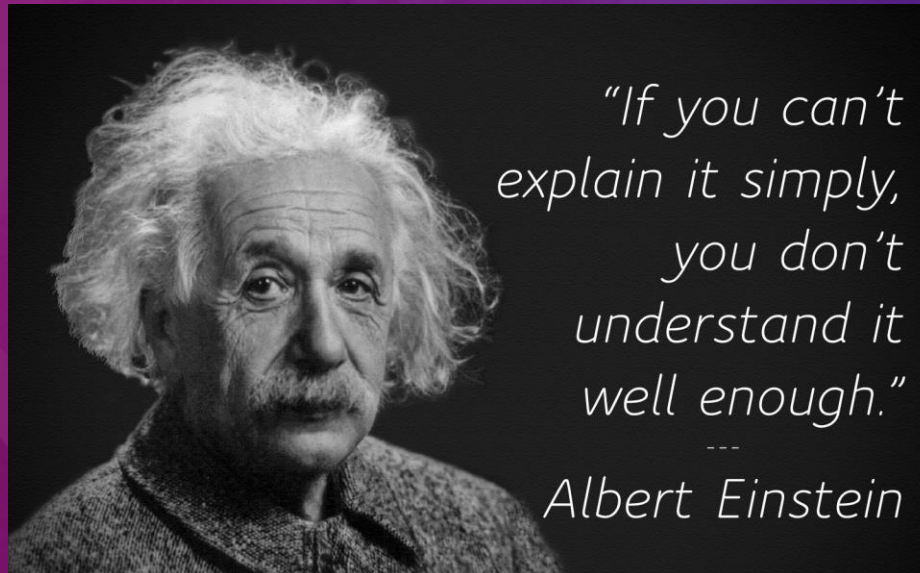


Practice and Teach Others

Try these two effective learning strategies!

2. *Teach*: Pretend you have to teach the material

- Practice teaching a friend or classmate
- Forces you to remember the overall concepts and the details





Preparing to Write the Exam

Increase your marks and decrease anxiety

Preparation Strategies

Self-Reflection

What are your **strengths** in an exam situation?

Do your grades on exams **reflect your knowledge** of the subject?

How do **tests help** with learning?

What are 2 or 3 ways you can **manage stress and anxiety** during an exam?

Preparation Strategies

Tips

Get plenty of **sleep** and eat a **healthy breakfast**

If you get stuck, **visualize** your study area

Take **time off** from studying the day of the exam!

Put yourself into a positive mindset:

*Try the **Power Pose!** Put your hands on your hips, chest out, and chin up. Hold until you feel powerful!*



Power Pose

Avoid Test Traps

Watch out for these common exam mistakes:

- Scaring yourself by talking with other anxious students before a test
- Diving into the first question without previewing the whole test
- Forgetting to answer questions
- Missing easy questions at the end of a test because you ran out of time
- Racing through a test so you can be the first to leave the room

Before the Test

Find the exam room before the day of the test, and arrive early.

- Choose your favourite seat
- Mentally prepare
 - Encourage yourself
 - Take a few calming breaths
 - Try the *4-7-8 Breathing* technique
- Brain-dump formulas, quotes, keywords, etc., onto a blank sheet of paper
- Pay close attention to the instructor's last-minute instructions
- Note the time constraints and make good use of your time

"4-7-8 Breathing"

Breathe in deeply for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and breathe out for 8 seconds.

During the Test

Copy the habits of successful test-takers:

- Read directions carefully!
- Skim through the entire test to preview the questions
- Note the number of marks each question and each section is worth
- Budget your time: aim for half done by the halftime mark
- Complete sections you're confident about first
- Before writing an essay response, create an outline
- Take five or ten minutes to look over your answers before handing in your exam

After You Get the Test Back

Once you've looked it over and reacted to your grade, take the time to think more deeply about how you did:

- Analyze your errors and your successes
- Look up answers to your mistakes
- Write down 2 things that went well & 2 things to improve for the future
- If you're unhappy, ask your instructor if a make-up exam is an option
- If possible, save the test so you can study it for future exams
- Low score on an exam? Talk to your instructor!
- High score on an exam? Celebrate your success!

Resources

Camosun Library Student Learning Success Guides

- https://camosun.libguides.com/Student_learning_success_guides
- See especially Studying, Tests, and Time Management

Camosun Writing Centre and Learning Skills

- <https://camosun.ca/services/academic-supports/help-centres/writing-centre-learning-skills>

Your school's Multilingual Support Specialist (MSS)

- <http://camosunmss.opened.ca>



Get studying! You got this.

References

Bitesize Support. (2022). Exam question terminology – command verbs and terms. *Exam Techniques*.

BBC. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zqd9j6f/revision/1>

Camosun Library Learning Skills. (n.d.). *Student learning success: tests*. Camosun College.

<https://camosun.libguides.com/Tests/prep>

Student Learning Development. (n.d.). *Key verbs found in exam questions*. Trinity College Dublin, The

University of Dublin. [https://student-learning.tcd.ie/assets/docs/exams/](https://student-learning.tcd.ie/assets/docs/exams/Key%20verbs%20exam%20questions.doc)

[Key%20verbs%20exam%20questions.doc](https://student-learning.tcd.ie/assets/docs/exams/Key%20verbs%20exam%20questions.doc)