

how to avoid cramming for exams



Learn the material! It sounds simple, but “original learning” needs to take place before you can review it effectively.

Review early. It’s the most efficient and most productive method, and it’s much easier to review what you already know than to relearn everything. Before you attempt to learn new material in class or through reading, glance over previous chapters or notes and recall what you know already. Immediately after learning, rework your notes and add material that comes to mind (but don’t recopy them – that’s a waste of time). Order and organize what was learned, using whatever works for you (e.g. stars, arrows, additional comments, etc.). Integrate the new material with what you already know.

Review often. Space your review sessions. 60 minutes used in 3 review sessions of 20 minutes each is more effective than 60 minutes used all at once. This avoids fatigue, strengthens previous learning, and increases motivation and better concentration.

Review before your final exam. Remember, your final review is a REVIEW, not a cramming of unlearned material. Don’t learn anything new unless it’s to draw together the final main currents of thought. Be brief, and review an entire semester’s work in a few hours (set a limit and stick to it.) Outline and organize everything from memory. Don’t bother copying. Also, try reciting what you know, either by writing it or saying it out loud to yourself or to a friend.