

## Advice about “How to Excel on Science Exams”

From Agnes Scott science faculty and staff

### Studying for the Test

- Make note cards during class of the terms or vocabulary notes you don't know, and fill them in the same day to keep up with the class.
- I found that re-drawing illustrations or re-writing flowcharts or figures from the book helped them sink in better. In biology especially, I used colored pencils and markers to copy images. This helped me watch out for the smaller details I might have missed otherwise.

—Shannon Reisner

- Pay attention to what study techniques help *you* excel, and around those, deliberately build a study routine to follow before *every* test. Write a list of things you want to accomplish, and give yourself enough time to get through all or most of the list.
- Here's an example list:
  - 1.) Re-read all notes from lecture
    - Annotate as you go along: Mark what seems confusing, highlight what seems important
  - 2.) Meet with study group
    - Do problems together and discuss concepts/processes (ex: meiosis)
  - 3.) Make notecards/master study sheets – combining lecture and textbook notes/material
    - This step is about organizing your notes with the aim of understanding (and remembering) concepts. Make one study sheet per chapter or section. You might include a flow-chart, draw out an important process. Or make one notecard per chemical reaction or physical equation.
  - 4.) Re-do homework problems/ book problems
  - 5.) Review textbook
    - Re-read parts you highlighted
    - Review diagrams/equations: Cover up the description and explain it to yourself

—Dara Satterfield

### Taking the Test

- When you sit down with the exam, sit comfortably and take a deep breath before you begin. If you are anxious, focus on how much you learned while studying!
- Don't feel you must go in order. Look over the entire exam at the beginning and start with the questions you feel most confident about. If points are assigned, begin with the questions that are worth the most.
- If you come to something you feel uncomfortable with, skip it and come back to it later (this is true even of parts of questions).
- Even if you are uncertain, write something down in answer to every question so you can get partial credit.
- If there is a multi-part question that builds up from previous answers and you get stumped, try making an assumption (or even guess) so that you can continue to the end. Many instructors will give you credit for a correct process even if the starting assumption was off, but they can't give you credit if there is nothing on the paper!
- If there are multiple choice questions, start by eliminating the answers you know are wrong.
- If you have time at the end, reread multi-part questions to be sure you didn't accidentally leave out a part.
- Plan to do something nice for yourself as a reward for finishing the exam, no matter how you feel at the end. This will give you something to look forward to and help relieve stress so you can focus on other courses.

—Dr. Amy Lovell

- Sleep the night before--a full night's sleep will do a world more good than stay up all night cramming.
- Take a deep breath
- Do the questions you feel confident about first. If you get stuck on a question, skip it and come back to it later.
- Manage your time based on the point values of the questions (i.e. Give yourself more time for a 10 point question than for a 3 point question).

—Quinn Perkins