Types of Test Questions: Studying Exams and Studying for Exams

As you prepare for college test-taking success, there are a couple of tips and tricks to keep in mind.

# Understand the expectations

Review your syllabus and class notes so that you know in advance what your professor expects you to study for the exam.

Ask Yourself, “What do I Need to Know from the Content?”

* Is the exam based on lecture notes, the text, class discussions, a combination of the three?
* Are there topics of greater or lesser importance?
* Is the exam cumulative (covering everything that you have learned up until that point) or limited to a specific section of the material?

## You Try It

Answer the above questions for our RDG1300 midterm/final exam

Ask Yourself, “How Much is this Exam Worth?”

The syllabus will include a breakdown of the course grades so that you know how much each exam is worth. Check whether the course grade is percentage or points based. (In a percentage-based class, a 100pt exam might be worth 30% of the course grade while in a points-based class, the same exam might be 100points out of a total of 500 for the class.)

## You Try It

Answer the above questions for our RDG1300 midterm/final exam

# Know what kinds of test questions to expect and how to answer them

## Types of Test Questions

There are seven types of exam questions that are commonly used on college exams. These include:

* Short Answer/Essay—these types of questions ask for a response to a topic or prompt using specific examples to support your claim. Read directions carefully to understand whether you are *Explaining (the causes, effects, etc.)*, *Arguing for/defending a position, Comparing or Contrasting.* Pay careful attention to point value. If there is a high-point essay at the end of the exam (and they are usually located at the end of the exam!), begin with this question so that you have sufficient time to answer it. For essay prompts, you may find it helpful to write a brief outline before you begin writing
* True/False—look for words like *“always” or “never.”* These words make statements seem true when it is usually false that something always or never happens.
* Multiple Choice—look for negatives that try to trip you up if you are reading too quickly
* Ordering—these questions will ask you to arrange a set of provided phrases or steps into a certain order. Be careful to note whether you can receive partial credit if you correctly order some of the steps.
* Fill-in-the-blank—these questions often test your understanding of vocabulary. Sometimes these questions include a word bank (list of the possible words). Read carefully to determine whether the same word can or cannot be used for more than one question
* Matching—similar to fill-in-the-blank questions with a word bank, these questions typically include vocabulary words and definitions
* Computational—think solving mathematical equations

There are many great resources to help students study for exams, such as [Open Polytechnic](https://www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/current-students/study-tips-and-techniques/studying-for-exams/types-of-exam-questions/)’s page. Take a moment to search for other resources and jot down any tips you come across here:

Most professors will share with students the breakdown of an exam, such as how many essay and short answer items will be on an exam and how many points these items will be worth.

## You Try It

Take notes about our RDG1300 midterm/final exam. We will create practice questions to ask each other.

# Prepare a study plan

Depending on the weight (importance) of the exam and your level of comfort with the material, you should prepare a study plan which breaks down the material you need to study so that you are reviewing over a period of days—*not hours!—*before the exam.

How did you study best in high school? With a partner/classmate? Flash cards? Rereading your class notes and textbook? Research shows that students learn material better when they have to *do something* with the knowledge. In other words, it’s less effective to simply reread flashcards or notes than it is to explain that information to someone else or apply it.

We will create study plans in class for our midterm and final exams.