

Test Prep: How to Prepare for Midterms

PPT Outline and Notes

A Quick Outline

I. Intro

- Hi, we just met
- Why we're here, noting our presence and intention

II. A bit about studying and learning

- Knowledge in the room – Who has learned about learning?
- Pair and Share – How do you study is it working?
- Brain Rules – Some things we can know about learning?

III. A bit about the testing experience

- Anxiety and Testing – checking in about anxiousness and anxiety
- Self-care and Strategies –self and community care

IV. A bit about practices and skills

- SQ4R
- Cornell
- Mnemonics

The short game- increase awareness of supports, habits and strategies.

The long game- build empowerment for liberated and connected learning.

Being Present

- Prior to the pandemic a lot occupied the mental and emotional space and impacted the bodies of learners.
- Past and future concerns, current struggles occupy us and often are connected to access to resources and the ability to be secure.
- We may be aware of disparities in security, ours or others', yet be uncertain of what to do.
- During this workshop we are honoring our interests in learning and supporting our efforts.
- We recognize the challenges above so we take care and bring (self)respectful focus to our learning.

If you are interested in learning more about mindfulness meditative practices, I encourage you to attend the weekly mindfulness sessions being offered at Seattle Central. Here are some short additional resources:

- [Mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org) -Daily Practices
- [Headpace.com](https://www.headpace.com) - one minute meditation
- [Berkeley's the Greater Good Magazine.](https://www.berkeleygoodmagazine.com)

Some previous student responses to how they felt about midterms prior to this workshop:

- Not too bad but I can feel the pressure/stress building up as midterms get closer.
- Scared, anxious, had a lot of various thoughts and planned to study hard for the exam.
- Feeling confused and curious.
- I was feeling lost. Needed help to do better in my exams.
- I was not sure about what things are different from what I can do, what we can use to better prepare.
- Not feeling overwhelmed yet, but know that I will be once the exam is in about a week – a few days away.
- Terrible: I already skipped my morning class because I was totally burnt out.

Knowledge in the Room

Consider the following questions:

- Have you ever learned anything about studying?
- Have you taken a class, workshop, lesson in studying?
- Have you learned about studying from a friend/family member/mentor?
- Have you read a book or learned online about studying?

Different students have had different opportunities (enforced or not) and different access in their histories to learn about learning. Opening the space to consider that how you study is greatly impacted by this please also consider:

- How do you study?
- Is that working for you?

“Metacognition” or thinking about thinking is part of developing critical thinking, a positive outcome of education particularly on the college level. We’ve touched on some of our personal experiences with learning. We will spend the remaining time on some things we can know about how our brains work, reflect on what that looks like in our learning environments and then consider some strategies.

Brain Rules - A perspective on learning and how our brains work

UW Professor of Bioengineering John Gardner has organized scientific and experiential knowledge about how our brains work and the impact on learning into [Brain Rules](#):

- Rule #1: Exercise boosts brain power.
- Rule #2: The human brain evolved, too.
- Rule #3: Every brain is wired differently.
- Rule #4: We don't pay attention to boring things.
- Rule #5: Repeat to remember.
- Rule #6: Remember to repeat.
- Rule #7: Sleep well, think well.
- Rule #8: Stressed brains don't learn the same way.
- Rule #9: Stimulate more of the senses.
- Rule #10: Vision trumps all other senses.
- Rule #11: Male and female brains are different.
- Rule #12: We are powerful and natural explorers.

I encourage you to check out [Brain Rules](#) in book format or online where there are several short videos and explanations of the "rules." Thinking about different impacts on our learning also helps us think about another impact.

Testing Anxiety

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.

People with anxiety disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. They may avoid certain situations out of worry. They may also have physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, dizziness or a rapid heartbeat.

[From APA website](#)

- **Preparation.** Be present in class, interact with your fellow students. Develop good study habits working intentionally and activating your learning with SQ4R, The Cornell Note-taking Method and mnemonics.
- **Skills.** Take practice tests and time yourself. Read questions, problems and directions carefully. Be strategic and answer questions you know first and then return to less certain ones. Find answers through elimination. Outline essays before you begin to write.

- **Attitude.** There is no benefit to negative thinking. Regardless of where you are at academically by the time of the test, approach it with a positive attitude to do your best.
- **Focus.** Be mindful about the test. Check-in with yourself and develop a calm, alertness that allows you to focus on the present not on your past studying or your future results, but rather the test itself.
- **Relaxation.** If you have difficulty calming your mind, take deep, slow breaths and consciously relax your muscles. A calm body calms the mind.
- **Health.** Sleep. Eat. Exercise. Meditate.
- **Community.** Seek assistance and support from those who can give it. Participate in positive socializing with activities and people who move you toward your goals. Connect to Seattle Central Counseling and the Disability Support Services office.

[Testing Anxiety page from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#)

Testing Techniques

1. **Data Dump:** Right away, turn your exam over and take 2-3 minutes writing down formulas or concepts that will help you during the test)
2. **Preview Test:** Look over all the questions so you know what to expect
3. **2nd Data Dump:** Expand formulas/concepts and add other things you remember
4. **Test Progress Schedule:** Find out the best way to get the most points in the least amount of time
5. **Answer Easy Questions:** A good way to help you get the most points upfront and save more time for challenging questions
6. **Skip Difficult Questions:** You can go back to them later, look over the questions twice and set a time limit to answer it...solve it or skip it.
7. **Review Skipped Questions:** Recall any related information about each question; this may help trigger the memory process (i.e., Is there something you remember from your homework or in class that has to do with this question?)
8. **Guess at Remaining Questions:** Don't leave anything blank, you may at least get a couple of points if you try and show your thought process.
9. **Review Entire Test:** You can double check you work for any errors or things you may have missed.
10. **Use all of Your Time:** Students who use all of their time tend to do better!

Active Learning

“Analysis of the research literature (Chickering and Gamson 1987), however, suggests that students must do more than just listen: They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. Most important, to be actively involved, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Within this context, it is proposed that strategies promoting active learning be defined as instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing.”

From "Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom by Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison"

Examples of Active Learning

- Example "active" activities include: class discussion, small group discussion, debate, posing questions to the class, think-pair-share activities, short written exercises and polling the class (Bonwell and Eison, 1991).
- A class discussion may be held in person or in an online environment. It is best that these discussions be centered on an open-ended (occasionally controversial) topic (e.g. one that has no right or wrong answer).
- A small group discussion is a similar activity between individual, groups, or teams of individuals. A presidential debate is a common debate format. But these also may center around controversial or political topic.
- A think-pair-share activity is when learners take a minute to ponder the previous lesson, later to discuss it with one or more of their peers, finally to share it with the class a part of a formal discussion.
- A short written exercise that is often used is the "one minute paper." In this exercise students are asked to summarize the day's discussion in a short paper to be turned in before the end of class. This is a good way to review materials.

How can you activate your learning?

As we may note from the examples of how instructors use active learning, there is a great benefit to social interaction in learning. You will find that participating in tutoring (either as a tutor or someone seeking support), forming study groups, more informal gatherings to discuss the class, and clubs connected to your academic area can support your learning.

Additionally, there are some ways of organizing your learning that can be helpful also when you are working more individually.

SQ4R

- Read with intention for better retention.
- What are you reading for?
- Note how this activates learning by priming your mind for what you are reading, attending to that task and then returning to it with the intention of preparing for future learning in class or in further reading as well as how it apply to other aspects of life.
- There are many [SQ4R videos](#) online that you can explore.

SQ4R

S = SCAN

each page quickly.

Q = QUESTION

as you scan.

R = READ

(does *not* mean reading every word.)

R = REFLECT

– think about what you've just read.

R = RECITE

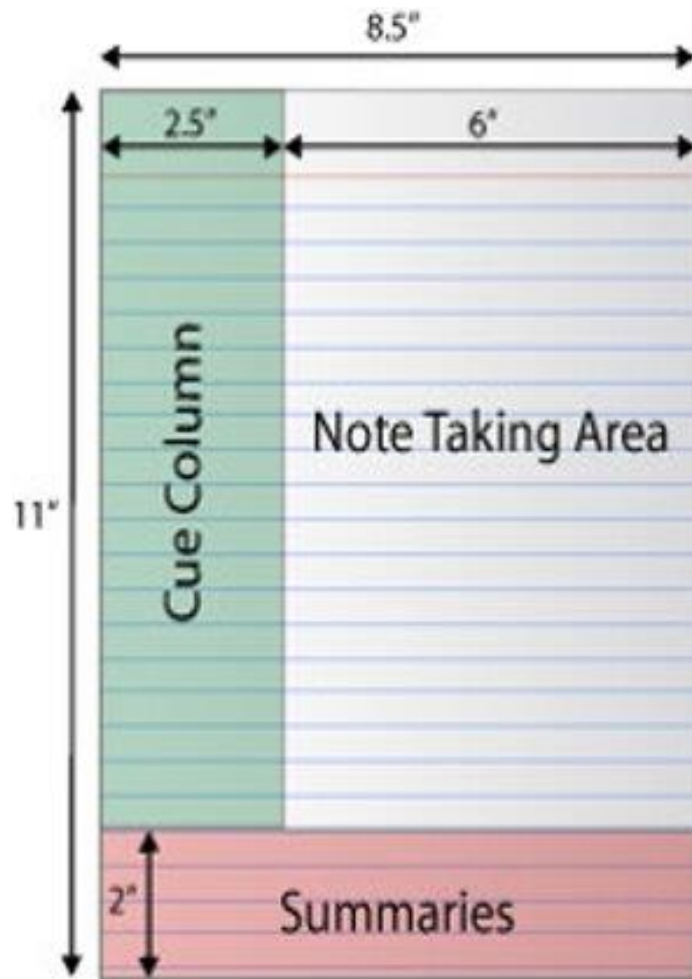
aloud to yourself as you read;
talk to yourself.

R = REVIEW

what you've just read.

Noting Taking with Intention and Strategy using the Cornell Method

- Writing down lecture notes or notes from a reading or watching can actively involve you.
- Different methods have benefits based on ease of use and usefulness.
- The Cornell Method helps one organize simply and strategically.
- Note the simple page set up and directions on how to use it below.
- There are many [Cornell Note-Taking videos](#) online to explore.



1. **Record** in the note-taking area as many meaningful facts and ideas as you can.
2. **Reduce** these ideas and facts concisely in the cue column. Summarizing clarifies meanings and relationships, reinforces continuity, and strengthens memory.
3. **Recite**, using only your jottings in the cue column, facts and ideas as fully as you can, in your own words and with as much appreciation of the meaning as you can.
4. **Reflect on material** and academic experiences by finding relationships among them. Label and index experiences and ideas, put them into structures, outlines, summaries, and frames of reference.
5. **Review** these notes to retain and to use your knowledge to greater and greater effectiveness.

Mnemonics

- Mnemonic techniques are memory aids.

- They can be numbers, words, phrases or visualization techniques that help you organize and recall information.
- Keep in mind that understanding is often the best way to remember. Memorization does not necessarily imply understanding.
- There are many [Mnemonic videos](#) to explore online.

Examples:

- Acronyms - SQ4R
- Sentences - Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally! (order of operations)
- Rhymes and songs - Number of days in a month.
- Visualization- Combine organization, visual memory, and association.

Respect and support for your continued learning, including tests!

Remember to be connected and reach out to:

[Tutoring](#)

[Counseling](#)