

The Five-Day Study Plan

Why 5 days? Research has proven processing information 5 to 7 times is required to make the shift from short-term to long-term memory. Information stored in the long-term memory, in most cases, is retrievable even if anxiety sets in. This level of preparation reduces test anxiety. The key to performing well on exams is preparing information early and reviewing information in short, frequent study sessions. If brief study sessions are spread out over several days, rather than in a lengthy “cram” session, the human brain retains more information.

Keys to the Five-Day Study Plan

- **Preparation:** Actively identify, organize, and combine information by chapters and class lectures. Divide material into “**chunks**” of information to learn in short, frequent study sessions by creating outlines, making notes, and completing study guides. Brain performance and retention is higher when you spend one hour studying each day for 5 days instead of studying for 5 hours in one day.
- **Review:** During each study session, actively review previous material to determine what information is not known or understood. By reviewing material over a period of 5 or more days, information is moved from short-term to long-term memory. This step allows the student to identify “gaps” in learning. (If the level of difficulty is high or if there is a lot of material to be studied, five days will probably not be enough preparation time. These are general guidelines.)
- **Focus study sessions:** Prepare and review during each study session. Each day prepare a chunk of new material and review a chunk or two of previous information. Use **active** (writing and reciting) study strategies. Refer to the example below. During preparation, the student is becoming familiar with material. When reviewing, the student is checking and strengthening their understanding of information.

Preparation Strategies	Review Strategies
Organize and copy notes (Cornell format)	Review notes by reading questions and covering answers, and then recalling answers
Answer questions at the end of the chapter or complete study guides	Write out answers and add to notes
Make flash cards or vocabulary cards	Use flashcards to test yourself on concepts and new vocabulary
Predict Possible Essay Questions	Practice recalling main points and writing essay answers
Draw a Picture or Concept Map	“One picture is worth a thousand words” Recreate the picture, graph, or concept map
Outline/summarize material	In your own words, rewrite your outline or summarization of material
List Practice Problems	Work practice problems
Make formula cards	Practice writing formulas
Create a practice test	Take the practice test
Prepare material for study group	Explain material to study partners

How to Use the Five-Day Study Plan

1. Break the material into chunks. Usually, material can be broken down by chapters or lectures.
2. Plan to spend a minimum of two hours studying, each day, over the next five days.
3. Studying is accomplished in two ways: Preparing and Reviewing

Example of the Time Frame for the Five-Day Study Plan:

*Amount of study time will vary according to the level of difficulty.

Tuesday:			
Prepare	→	1 st Chunk	2 Hours
Wednesday:			
Prepare	→	2 nd Chunk	2 Hours
Review	→	1 st Chunk	30 Minutes
Thursday:			
Prepare	→	3 rd Chunk	1 to ½ Hours
Review	→	2 nd Chunk	30 Minutes
Review	→	1 st Chunk	15 Minutes
Friday:			
Prepare	→	4 th Chunk	1 Hour
Review	→	3 rd Chunk	30 Minutes
Review	→	2 nd Chunk	15 Minutes
Review	→	1 st Chunk	10 Minutes
Sunday:			
Review	→	4 th Chunk	30 Minutes
Review	→	3 rd Chunk	20 Minutes
Review	→	2 nd Chunk	10 Minutes
Review	→	1 st Chunk	10 Minutes
Self-Test			

Five-Day Study Plan

Exam Date _____ Course _____

Day One	Prepare What?	Prepare How?	Review What?	Review How?
Day Two				
Day Three				
Day Four				
Day Five				

Adapted from The Learning Strategies Center at Cornell University