

Test Taking Strategies After the Exam

Whether you did very well on the exam or not, you should use every exam as a place where you can create a strategy moving forward, and prepare for finals. After you get your exam back, you should:

Read through the graded exam. Create a system where you mark where you missed points and why. An example is below:

- **C Concept** – Place a ‘C’ next to a question or missed points that was due to not knowing the entire concept.
- **P Partial** – Place a ‘P’ next to missed points for knowing part of the concept but missing other parts.
- **S Silly** – Place an ‘S’ next to missed points where you knew the concept but made a simple error.

After you know where and how you made mistakes, create a plan for future studying. DO NOT just put the test away and never look at it. Consider the following:

- Did you have more C, P, or S in this exam? What does that tell you about your level of preparation, or how you managed your time during an exam?
 - If you have a lot of ‘C’, meaning, you did not know many of the concepts on the exam, this means you did not know what to study. Talk with your professor about how to narrow down topics to study for your next exam.
 - If you have a lot ‘P’ this means you may have known what to study, but you did not prepare enough in your studying to know it well enough to perform under the pressure of an exam. Talk with your professor or look at or ‘before the test’ recommendations to prepare for your next exam.
 - If you have a lot of ‘S’ this means you did not have a good test taking strategy. You should plan your time better in the future, and double check your work. Many times when people have a lot of ‘S’ it is because they saved easy questions for last and then rushed through them. Next time, start with the easier questions and get the easy points out of the way to lessen the possibility of silly mistakes.
- Consider your test preparation for this exam and create a plan for your next exam.
 - Did you spend too much or not enough time studying prior to the exam?
 - Did you incorporate interval studying, different studying methods (practice problems, teaching others, tutoring, etc)?
 - Did you go to office hours, review sessions, and other hosted events to prepare?
- Consider how you managed yourself during the exam. Create a strategy moving forward to improve.
 - Did you run out of time?
 - Did you forget things you felt confident about prior to the exam?
 - Did you go into the exam feeling nourished and hydrated?

Go to your professor office hours

- Bring your exam with you (including your strategy for improving on your next exam).
- Note: This is not the TA! Use this time to build a relationship with your professor – your professor gives the final say on your grades. If they know you a little more, they can individualize their teaching to help you understand the concepts.
- Professors can also give you cues as to what will be on your next test or finals.

- Finally, depending on your class, some of the grading may be done by students. Therefore, going over the test with your professor can give you the opportunity to get points back if a grader was harsher or if there are other circumstances where a professor can have some leeway.
- If there is no way to go to office hours, then do make a point to sit down with a tutor, TA, or other person you trust to go over your exam in detail.

Make a study guide for finals

- Spend the time now to make a study guide for finals. You will thank yourself later for this!
- Use the information you learned after analyzing your exam, going to office hours, and cue from your instructor.
- Make a guide for the concepts you know well, where you need more review in the future, and pull some practice problems, note cards, etc to use in preparation for finals. Take an hour to do this now, and save it.
- When you are 3-4 weeks before finals, begin reviewing this material in small increments. Don't stress about it, but take the time to practice, recall information, teach another person, etc. Make a point to use interval studying for this!