



# Preparing for Finals

**A Learning Center Workshop**

In this  
presentation,  
we're going to  
talk about:

## What to Study

- prioritizing all the material you might be tested on

## How to Study

- some strategies for using your study time most effectively

## Get Started!

- Tools to help you get organized

## What to Study

- **How do you decide what topics you should study for a given final exam?**
  - **Did your professor provide guidance such as a study guide or essay prompts?**
  - **Is your final cumulative or does it focus on a particular unit?**
  - **What class resources were emphasized throughout the semester?**
  - **Do you have final review worksheets or exams provided by the professor?**

# What to Study

- **How do you prioritize topics to be sure you get the most out of your study time?**
  - **Which topics are you most comfortable with? Least comfortable?**
  - **How much time do you have to study?**
  - **What other finals do you need to study for, and what are their time commitments?**

Use your syllabus, textbook and notes, and old exams to make a list of topics likely to be tested. If it's mentioned in the lecture or if it's shown up on a quiz/test, it's likely very important!

## A helpful approach:

- Assign each topic a score 1-3:
  - 1) I don't know — I'm not sure what this is or don't remember learning it.
  - 2) I sort of know — I recognize the term and have some basic knowledge. I could solve some of the problems correctly, but not all.
  - 3) I know well — I could teach this information or solve most or all the problems correctly.

Start with the topics you need to review the most, time permitting. You can also be strategic in choosing which topics will require the most work and which you can more easily take from a category 1 or 2 to a 3. It can be tempting to start with what we feel most comfortable with because, well, it's comfortable and makes us feel good! But, you don't want to cram the stuff you don't know as well. Remember spacing out our practice will help those unfamiliar topics stick.

## An alternative approach

Using only your syllabus as a guide, create an outline from memory of all the content that will be on the exam.

- Start with the highest level of content (sections/themes/big ideas/concepts) and then drill down. DON'T use anything but the syllabus (no books, articles, internet, etc.)
- After you've filled out what you do know, use another color of text to fill in the gaps.
- Your outline will help you determine what you already know well (and therefore don't need to study) and what you don't know well (study this!).

This is a very active learning approach since it requires you to pull knowledge from memory to see exactly where you stand. The point of this approach is for you to determine from memory what you already know well and what you don't know. It's going to take a little longer than the ranking approach we just discussed, but it will be more accurate in determining what you know and don't know; thus, you'll be better able to focus your studying on what you don't know. This strategy may be more effective for testing your knowledge on concepts rather than problem-solving ability of particular problems (i.e. math problems).

# How to Study

- Once you've decided what you want to study, be sure you're using active learning strategies to learn that material.
- Be intentional about creating a study schedule that works for you. Use our planners (linked in a later slide) to help you space out the studying so you can avoid cramming. Additionally, planning your study routine can help distribute the time between classes and help you incorporate self-care and taking breaks.

# Active Learning Strategies

- What are some examples of active learning strategies that you have used for your classes this semester??
- Active learning strategies could include:
  - Teaching information
  - Solving problems from memory
  - Creating concept maps to connect information
  - Creating test questions
  - Working with classmates via Zoom to discuss concepts
  - Retaking practice exams or quizzes



# How do you plan for tackling all the material and midterms you have coming up?

## Distributed Practice

- It's important to make a study plan that will give you plenty of time to study material AND review it before the exam.
- We learn best when we study in smaller vs. longer chunks of time.
- Studying in several smaller sessions over the course of the week is more effective than one huge block of time.
- Switching between subjects can also be helpful.

The Pomodoro method is a great way of helping you move through your study time.

## Pomodoro Method

- You can set specific goals for each of your Pomodoro sessions to keep you on track. You can also mix up the subjects you study (a process called interleaving) to allow you to make progress in multiple classes.
- Work for 25 minutes and take a 5 minute break. Repeat.\*
- Record the number of completed Pomodoro sessions to stay motivated.

\*Or 45 mins and 15 mins... pick the time that works for you.

**Taking breaks  
is important!**

- **Your brain has two modes of thinking:**
  - **Focused — what your brain is thinking about right now**
  - **Diffuse — what your brain is working on in the background**
- **You learn better when you include breaks to go to the gym, eat, or just rest your brain because it allows your brain to process and organize information in the background (diffuse mode).**
- **While you're at home, it can be easy to remain in the same place inside all day. Be intentional about taking movement breaks outside to help you reset and regain focus before returning to work**

## Create a Finals Study Plan

- Determine approximately how many hours to study for each exam.
- Use a calendar or planner to determine when you'll study for each, keeping in mind the principle of distributed practice.

## Create a Finals Study Plan

Use our tools to help you succeed!

- [Final Exam Planner](#): helps you prioritize **which classes** to focus on more and **what topics** to study.
- [End of Semester Calendar](#): Big picture scheduler that helps you spread your work over multiple days/weeks.
- [Final Exam Day-by-Day Planner](#): helps you decide how to you spend your time studying during the exam period.
- [Master Task Table](#): helps you decide what tasks you need to do each day during the exam period.

## Create a Finals Study Plan

- Use our tools to create a study plan that works for you:
  - Enter exam times
  - Decide *what* you'll need to study for each exam
  - Decide *how long* you'll need or have to study for each exam
  - Distribute study time over exam period
  - Build in breaks, meals, rewards
  - Be specific about goals for each study block

Follow up!

- Visit [learningcenter.unc.edu](https://learningcenter.unc.edu) to make an appointment with an academic coach!