



# FRESHMAN ADVISING PROGRAM

## *Gabelli School of Business*

Small Group Meeting 1; October 6, 2011

## PREPARING FOR MIDTERMS

- **TIME MANAGEMENT**

- **SCHEDULE:** Use the provided handout to develop a schedule that specifies timeslots for academic time (classes, studying, homework), personal time (eating, sleeping, socializing with friends, TV, video games, gym, sports, doing nothing, time with a partner, fun reading, hobbies, religious activities), extracurricular activities (clubs, campus events, recruiting opportunities, etc.), etc. Try to COLOR CODE different activities if possible.
- **PRIORITIES:** Prior to actually putting things on the schedule, brainstorm all of the things that would be on your timetable. Then, prioritize those items and estimate the time spent on each item. Then, fill out the schedule according to those priorities. Class attendance, homework, and studying should be top priorities.
- **TIME WASTERS:** Brainstorm things that may take time away from studying. It is important to work some of these things into your weekly schedules, but not so much that your academics suffer. Examples include: watching TV, sleeping too much, internet, etc.
- **STUDY TIME:** In addition to adding classes and homework time to the schedule, it is important to include study time/notes review time just after classes.
  - If you review your notes for short periods of time several times between class and an exam, your memory of the material will be stronger than if you just study once for a long period of time.
  - Also, a short review within minutes or hours of a class can move material from short-term memory to long-term memory.
  - Spend at least two hours of quality study time for each hour of lecture in the course – that's six hours a week for a three-credit course.
  - Quality over quantity: study one subject 30-50 minutes at a time – no longer. If longer, your brain becomes less effective at processing information. Take a 10-minute break and then move on to another subject. Start with more difficult subjects first since they require the most concentration.

## ○ GENERAL TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

- **Learn from the general to the specific:** If you're lost, step back and look at the big picture.
- **Reduce interference:** Find a quiet place that is free from distraction.
- **Organize it:** Organized information is easy to find.
- **Distribute learning:** You can get more done when you take regular breaks, and you can use them as mini-rewards.
- **Use it before you lose it:** Even information stored in long-term memory becomes difficult to recall if we don't use it regularly. Things people do to help remember include:
  - Saying things out loud
  - Re-writing things
  - Typing things
  - Making a picture
  - Use more than one sense
- **Read it, write it, speak it, listen to it, apply it:** find some way to make contact with the information regularly.
- **Know what works for you:** When are you at your best: morning, afternoon, or night? When are you most productive? Save the most important items that need to be done for your best time.
- **Keep a working calendar AND to-do list:** Keep them with you.
- **Use the above to be in charge of your time.** If you see yourself as in charge, it will become easier to say no to the things that get in the way. Friends will begin to respect that if you are consistent.
- **Find a good place:** to read, to write, and to study.
- **Don't fool yourself:** There should never be a day when you do not have any homework. Even if you don't have anything to hand in, make sure you are reading and preparing for your next class.
- **Give yourself a break:** Don't expect yourself to be a whirlwind of productivity every day of the week. But don't use breaks as an excuse to get nothing done – you don't need breaks every 3 minutes!
- **Give yourself a reward:** Decide what your reward will be and how you will get it- this will motivate you and also give yourself a little break.
- **Keep fueled and hydrated:** Bring a snack item to a long class or to have between classes when you don't have a traditional lunch hour off.
- **Stay healthy and don't skip class:** When you spend time making up something that you missed, you are taking time away from what is already scheduled for that time period.

- **PRE-MIDTERM STUDY TIPS**

- **Attend every class**
- Read text carefully prior to the lecture; be prepared to ask professor about any material not understood from the reading
- Make notes/underline/highlight your assigned readings and resources so you own the material
- Create Flash Cards to help learn any terminology or concepts; study when you have free time (on the subway, doing laundry, etc.)
- Listen during class – do not try to multi-task during class
- Participate in class
- Take good notes in class
- Re-read text right after the lecture; this helps convert short-term memory to long-term
- Review notes right after class or as soon as possible
- Answer questions at end of chapters without looking up answers; then check for accuracy
- Visit your professor during office hours – do not wait until you are in trouble
- Read and annotate all assignments and supplemental material
- For an overview, create flow charts and concept maps to organize information
- Make sure you get enough sleep
- Eat well (healthy)
- Take care of immediate sign of a cold or illness
- Do not allow your social behavior to interfere with your academic obligations
- Plan for study breaks
- Reward yourself with fun time off
- Engage in discussions with classmates outside of class to merge the material
- If available, take review tests or attend study sessions offered by the professor
- Prepare for the type of exam your professor gives
- Perfect you ability to write an essay; utilize the Writing Center if necessary
- Keep a positive attitude; do not let yourself think “I’m no good at that subject”
- Drink plenty of water the day before an exam
- Do not depend on your ability to cram well or work under pressure
- Use office hours, study centers, and tutors before you are in danger of failing
- Withdraw from a class prior to it becoming a WF so that you won’t drag your other grades down as well
- Establish boundaries with your family and friends so they respect your study time
- Plan other things around your academics - not the other way around

## • Hints for Test-Taking

Arrive with all the materials you will need: pencil, pen, eraser, and calculator (if needed). First, make a bathroom stop – you may not be allowed to leave the room during the exam.

Do a “mind dump” of information (equations etc.) you might forget in a margin or on the back of the exam.

Check the page count on the exam and make sure the questions are numbered sequentially. Occasionally copy machines malfunction and produce a defective copy. Read all directions in the test carefully before beginning the exam. Underline or highlight important directions so they will stand out when you come to that section. If you find an ambiguity, get it clarified immediately. The same goes for specific questions in the exam. It is better not to base an answer on an assumption you make that may be incorrect. Instructors do make mistakes on their exams too.

Learn to pace yourself when taking an exam. Bring a watch so you can keep track of the time. Find out how important each section of the exam is based on its point value. Then determine how much time you will allow yourself per section and per question in each section and try to stick to it. Here are some general guidelines:

- True or false or fill-in questions – a half minute to one minute per question.
- Multiple choice – one minute per question.
- Matching – a half minute per term in a column (count only terms in the longest column)
- Definitions – two minutes per question.
- Essays – 5 to 6 minutes per question.

Note that you do not have the time to make this a major production. This evaluation should take under a minute to perform.

Since instructors vary in how many questions of which type they include in an exam, you should do some simple math to make sure the guidelines above are applicable. If not, adjust the time spent per question.

Start with the easiest (for you) section or questions of the text, regardless of how your instructor has set the test up. Getting correct answers down early is a good confidence booster.

Pace yourself. If a question stumps you, skip it temporarily and come back to it later. You don't want to spend a lot of time wracking your brain and then run out of time on the remaining easy questions.

Read each question carefully before attempting to answer it. Re-read it if you are confused. If necessary, ask your instructor to help you interpret the question. It is possible your instructor will make a general announcement to the class if the wording of the question itself is misleading or confusing.

Keep your eyes on your own test. Do nothing to give the instructor the impression you're cheating.

Fight your feelings of inadequacy when you see students leaving the exam early. Instructors have found that an early departure usually means that the student was unprepared for the exam and has, in fact, given up.

If you should finish the test early, go over it again and proof-read your subjective answers for content, relevance, grammar, and spelling. Not even professional authors write perfect prose the first time—and they are not suffering test anxiety!

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

Check the directions to see if only one or more than one correct answer is called for per question.

Read each question as though you were going to answer it without reference to the choices that follow.

Then study the alternatives and choose the one closest to the answer in your mind.

Use the process of elimination when you are not sure of the answer. You should easily be able to eliminate all but two alternatives. If you still are not sure, cross out the obviously incorrect answers and postpone your final decision until later in the exam. Maybe some other question or response on the exam will jog your memory regarding this one.

Or use the true-false method: convert the main body of the question and one of the alternatives into a true-false question. If you would answer “false”, go to the next alternative and do the same. The alternative that makes the entire statement true is the correct choice.

When the alternatives contain numbers, the numbers at the extremes of the range given are usually incorrect choices.

Choose alternatives that are longer and more descriptive. Often the instructor must qualify the alternative in some way to make it the correct choice.

When two answers are very similar, it is likely that one of these is the correct choice.

If two alternatives contain similar-sounding words, one of these is probably the correct answer.

If two alternatives are opposites, it is likely that one of these is the correct choice.

Watch out for negative words in the main body of the question. A “NOT” in the body means you are looking for the alternative that is INCORRECT.

If an alternative does not match the body of the question grammatically, it is probably NOT the correct answer.

If the last alternative is “all of the above” and you know that at least two other choices are correct, then this should be your choice.

Don’t look for patterns. If your three or four previous responses were all “c”, that is no reason to believe the answer to this question could not possibly be “c” also.

Do not leave any multiple choice questions blank unless you are penalized for wrong answers. If you guess, you have a one-in-four or a one-in-five chance of being correct; if you leave it blank you have zero chance of being right.

Most often your original response is correct. Don’t second guess yourself and change your answers unless you are absolutely sure your original answer is wrong.

### **ESSAY QUESTIONS**

Read the directions to see whether you must answer all of the essay questions or you have a choice.

Read the question carefully several times. Make sure you know what is being asked. Circle the key words in longer questions to ensure that you do not lose sight of what the question is seeking. Underline the verbs that give you direction (in terms of the answer sought) and make sure you know what they mean:

Analyze - break the topic into parts and discuss, examine or interpret each part.

Compare - examine the characteristics of the things being compared. Stress similarities and note differences.

Contrast - emphasize differences in the characteristics of the things indicated.

Define - give a clear, concise meaning of the term, and explain the meaning, if necessary. Write it the way it would appear in your text.

Describe - give a detailed account; characterize the term or concept.

Diagram - sketch a neat drawing and label all its parts clearly. Add a brief description or explanation for clarification.

Discuss - examine, analyze, and present the pros and cons of the topic in detail.

Evaluate - carefully appraise the topic through the eyes of an expert, giving its advantages and its limitations.

Explain - interpret the information given about a topic. If it is a process, start with the initial cause and show, through a series of cause and effect relationships, the ultimate outcome.

List - present an itemized series (= grocery list) of characteristics, etc.

State - present the major points only. Skip the details, illustrations, examples.

Summarize - give a condensed account; including any conclusions. Skip the details.

Organize your thoughts before you begin to write. On the back of the bluebook or the preceding test page write all the main ideas (words, phrases) you wish to include in your answer. Then organize these main ideas into a short outline of your answer. Write your answer neatly and clearly. Get to the point immediately and put your best points first. Poor penmanship can cost you points.

Write a clear statement of your thesis and then flesh it out with supporting material. Pause and check the question again after making each point to make sure your answer stays relevant.

Upon completion of your answer, read the question yet again to make sure you have addressed all of the issues presented in the question.

If you find you are running out of time, make sure you get at least the outlines written down for the remaining essay questions. A decent outline of the answer should get you most of the credit.

### **TRUE AND FALSE**

Check for qualifying words such as “always – usually – seldom – never”, “largest – smallest”, “all – most – some”, etc. To test for truth, substitute other members of the series. If one of these makes the statement more accurate, the original statement is false. Often the extreme qualifiers (e.g. “always”, “never”) almost always make the statement false.

Watch for limiting or modifying phrases in the statement. If the phrase is wrong then the entire statement is false.

If there is more than one idea or concept in the statement, both must be true for the statement to be true.

### **MATCHING**

Check the directions on the matching question to see if each choice is used only once or can be used more than once.

Work with the column of choices. Match the first item in that column with one of the terms in the other column. Repeat the process with the second choice. If a single choice seems to fit several terms in the other column, check the directions accompanying the matching question to see if multiple answers are expected. If each choice is to be used only once, finish the matching question. Then, after you have matched all the terms decide which match seems more appropriate for any term you have used more than once.

### **AFTER THE EXAM**

Analyze your previous exams. Do you lose more points on the objective portion (true and false, fill in, multiple choice, matching) or the subjective (definition, short answer, essay)?

Look at each question and the answer you wrote. For essays, note the grade you received for your answer.

Look at your instructor’s feedback to see what you should have included in your answer for full credit. Eventually you should see a pattern to your instructor’s style of questioning. Use this information to adjust your study practices and preparation for future exams. Remember that your test-taking also can be improved upon with some test review and reconsideration of test-taking strategies.

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