

5-Day Study Plan

We have all heard of college students pulling infamous “all-night” study sessions before exams. And you might have excelled in high school just by cramming in a study session the night before an exam. In college, however, you need to alter your approach. College exams will likely require you to recall and think critically about more material than you can study in one all-night session. On top of that, researchers have found that students learn more effectively by spreading out short study sessions over multiple days or even weeks than in one or two lengthy sessions. The baseline recommendation for college test-preparation is that you adopt at least a 5-Day Study Plan.

With a 5-Day Study Plan, you set yourself up for success by starting early and pacing out your study sessions in a way that maximizes your learning potential so you can ace your exams.

How to Create a 5-Day Study Plan

- Step 1: Space out your exam preparation over a period of at least five (5) days, devoting two (2) – two and a half (2 ½) hours each day to studying. Study days do not need to be consecutive, but need to be days that you will be able to provide full focus to your material.
- Step 2: Divide your material into four (4) or more sections or chunks. Each chunk of information will be either prepared or reviewed in a two (2) hour study session.
- Step 3: In each study session, prepare and cover a new section of material, then practice what you studied the previous day.
- Step 4: Use active strategies to prepare and practice study materials.
- Step 5: Self-test. Attempting to recall information from memory is scientifically proven to aid learning better than repeated practice.

Examples of Ways to Actively Prepare and Practice

Each preparation strategy (left column) has a corresponding practice strategy (right column). The purpose of these strategies is to ensure that you are actively interacting with the material. It is also recommended that you utilize at least two (2) strategies for each section/chunk of material. See our [Active Studying](#) handout for more information.

Preparation Strategies	Practice Strategies
Develop study sheets	Recite study sheets
Develop concept maps	Replicate concept maps from memory
Make word cards	Recite word cards
Make question cards	Recite question cards
Make formula cards	Practice writing formulas
Make problem cards	Work problems

Make self-tests	Take self-tests
Do study guides	Practice study guide info out loud
Re-mark text material	Take notes on the re-marked text
Make a list of 20 topics that might be on the exam	Recite the list of 20 possible exam topics
Do problems	Do “missed” problems
Make an outline	Recite notes from recall cues
Summarize material	Recite summary out loud
Make charts of related material	Re-create chart from memory
List steps in a process	Recite steps from memory
Predict essay questions	Answer essay questions
Answer questions at the end of the chapter	Practice reciting main points
Prepare material for study group	Explain material to study group

The 5-Day Study Plan Table

Choose strategies from the table above, or your own, and use them in the “Prepare/Practice Strategies” columns below.

Day /Time	Material	Active Prepare/Practice Strategies	Approximate Time Needed
1	Prepare	Oldest/hardest chunk of material	2 hours
2	Prepare Practice	2nd oldest chunk of material 1st chunk of material	2 hours 30 minutes
3	Prepare Practice Practice	3rd chunk of material 2nd chunk of material 1st chunk of material	1.5 hours 30 minutes 20 minutes
4	Prepare Practice Practice Practice	4th chunk of material 3rd chunk of material 2nd chunk of material 1st chunk of material	1 hour 30 minutes 20 minutes 10 minutes
5	Practice Practice Practice Practice Self-test	4th chunk of material 3rd chunk of material 2nd chunk of material 1st chunk of material All material	30 minutes 20 minutes 10 minutes 10 minutes 1 hour
		Total time	11 hours
6	TEST!		

Example 5-Day Study Plan

Sample 5-day study plan for an Animal Science course:

Course: ANSC	Material: Be Specific!	How am I actively studying?
Prepare Day 1 (2 hrs): Friday, 2pm	History of the Horse	Make a timeline
Prepare Day 2 (2 hrs): Sunday, 5pm	Breeds of Horses	Make flashcards
Practice Day 1 (30 mins)	History of the Horse	Create visual aids to associate with each event
Prepare Day 3 (1.5 hrs): Monday, 5pm	Methods of ID	Make a concept map
Practice Day 2 (30 mins)	Breeds of Horses	Shuffle flashcards to practice in a different order
Day 1 (20 mins)	History of the Horse	Identify relationships between events on timeline
Prepare Day 4 (1 hr): Tuesday, 2:30pm	Anatomy, Conform, and Gaits	Make diagrams for each
Practice Day 3 (30 mins)	Methods of ID	Reorganize concept map and identify gaps
Day 2 (20 mins)	Breeds of Horses	Categorize flashcards by different criteria
Day 1 (10 mins)	History of the Horse	Write a mini summary of why each event is significant
Day 5: Wednesday, 5pm	All material	Self-test
Practice Day 4 (30 mins)	Anatomy, Conform, and Gaits	Fill in a blank diagram by memory
Day 3 (20 mins)	Methods of ID	Apply concept map to practice problems
Day 2 (10 mins)	Breeds of Horses	Write a mini summary for each flashcard by memory
Day 1 (10 mins)	History of the Horse	Teach timeline to roommate
Test Day!		
Test Date: Thursday, 9/19 Time: 12:45pm-2pm Location: KLCT 108	Items Needed (scantron, calculator, etc.): Blue full page scantron	

Blank 5-Day Study Plan

Course: ANSC	Material: Be Specific!	How am I actively studying?
Prepare Day 1 (2 hrs):		
Prepare Day 2 (2 hrs):		
Practice Day 1 (30 mins)		
Prepare Day 3 (1.5 hrs):		
Practice Day 2 (30 mins)		
Day 1 (20 mins)		
Prepare Day 4 (1 hr):		
Practice Day 3 (30 mins)		
Day 2 (20 mins)		
Day 1 (10 mins)		
Day 5:	All material	Self-test
Practice Day 4 (30 mins)		
Day 3 (20 mins)		
Day 2 (10 mins)		
Day 1 (10 mins)		
Test Day!		
Test Date:	Items Needed (scantron, calculator, etc.):	
Time:		
Location:		