

Survival Suggestions for Final Exam Preparation

“Lost, yesterday, somewhere between Sunrise and Sunset, two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes. No reward is offered, for they are gone forever.”

Horace Mann, educator

With the arrival of daylight savings time, we “spring” forward, reminding ourselves as we lose an hour how precious TIME is! Looking ahead, we see that final exams will soon be upon us. How can we help students optimize the remaining time in the third trimester?

Lately there have been news stories and research on the need for managing distractions, particularly the need to disconnect from too much technology. While we are aware of the merits of information technology, students readily admit to various levels of “techno-addiction.” Now, in addition to ADD, we have IAD (Internet Addiction Disorder). Begin now to help students “unplug” gradually. Talk with them about balancing, or removing, unnecessary distractions.

“It takes time to adjust to going off-line,” says executive coach Andrea Bauer. Encourage your students to connect to themselves, not just the computer. Studies show that heavy, “info-centric” multitasking has an effect on our cognitive life and takes us 50 percent longer to learn information. Help students to take the time to slow down, focus and think!

The best advice for promoting student success and lessening stress is thoughtful, advance preparation. The following suggestions from the experts can guide parents to help at home during the final weeks of school.

- Ask your child to assess his/her current standing in each class. A simple way to do this is an easy metacognitive analysis with which most students are familiar. Have them simply ask themselves, “What is going well?” “What is not?” and “What do I need to do?” The last answer might include going to seek extra help, doing more frequent nightly review, or taking better class notes.
- Suggest that the student begin to collect and organize the year’s work. Remind the student to find and save old tests and quizzes, worksheets, lab reports, handouts, class notes, etc. Organize and clip them together by course and trimester; then chapter or unit (theme).
- Approximately three weeks prior to final exams, students will receive review sheets for each subject. At this time, each student should begin a plan of review, especially for those areas that need improvement. At the same time, they should set some realistic goals and specific action steps where they can literally check and measure their progress. It is beneficial for students to keep focused by studying “actively.” To promote active review, students can re-read sections, boil-down or summarize their notes, highlight key points and details, study out loud, alone or with a friend, and ask themselves questions for clarification. If anything is confusing, students should ask for assistance from a teacher or friend.
- Then, the week before exams, it is suggested that students refine a plan and begin daily review, parallel to the reviews that are happening every day in classes. Short reviews over an extended period of time provide the best results. Building confidence is

important for avoiding a panic or last-minute stress. Enough sleep, exercise and good, healthy eating cannot be underscored.

Students need the help of their parents because it is a proven fact that the home environment is a critical factor for student success. Providing encouragement, a positive attitude and appropriate conditions at exam time are all important. Communication is key. Know, and perhaps, post your child's exam schedule. Encourage realistic study times that fit into the family's schedule. Minimize distractions. Help with a plan and the pacing. Be assured that this is a challenging time for everyone, but with planning and careful preparation, the results will be as satisfying as possible for all.

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