

Writing online and take-home exams

Academic Learning Centre and Student Engagement and Success



**University
of Manitoba**

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we are in Treaty 1 territory; the land on which we gather for classes is the traditional territory of Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.



Overview

1. Expectations for online exams
2. Preparing for online and take-home exams
 1. Multiple choice
 2. Problem-based
 3. Essay response and take-home exams
3. Writing online exams and avoiding academic misconduct
4. Exam emergencies



How are online and in-person exams similar?

- Study and prepare
- Maintain academic integrity standards.
- Read and follow instructions very carefully
- Timed



Online exam expectations

- Questions constructed for online exams focus on application and analysis
- You can access class materials, but most tests are constructed to limit the effectiveness of that access
- Technology is your responsibility and there may be glitches



How to prepare?

Study for this type of exam just like you would study for regular exam.

Gather and organize study materials

- List what topics/concepts you'll need to know for each text/exam
- Organize and gather materials
 - Lecture notes – make sure they are organized, and key information is easily accessed. Reduce where possible.
 - Textbook – use sticky notes so you can easily turn to sections you think are important.
 - Slides - compile key slides. Organize according to topic - print, if possible.



Study

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LEARNINGSIENTISTS.ORG

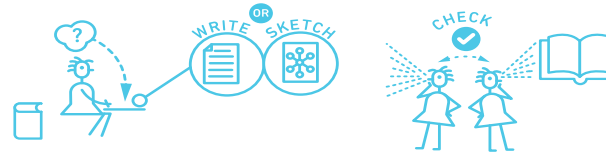
LEARN TO STUDY USING... Retrieval Practice

PRACTICE BRINGING INFORMATION TO MIND



HOW TO DO IT

Put away your class materials, and write or sketch everything you know. Be as thorough as possible. Then, check your class materials for accuracy and important points you missed.



Take as many practice tests as you can get your hands on. If you don't have ready-made tests, try making your own and trading with a friend who has done the same.



You can also make flashcards. Just make sure you practice recalling the information on them, and go beyond definitions by thinking of links between ideas.



HOLD ON!



Retrieval practice works best when you go back to check your class materials for accuracy afterward.



Retrieval is hard! If you're struggling, identify the things you've missed from your class materials, and work your way up to recalling it on your own with the class materials closed.



Don't only recall words and definitions. Make sure to recall main ideas, how things are related or different from one another, and new examples.

RESEARCH

Read more about
retrieval practice
as a study strategy

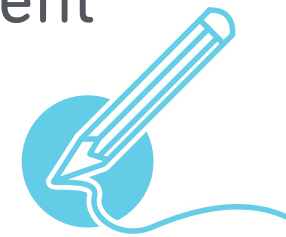
Roediger, H. L., Putnam, A. L., & Smith, M. A. (2011). Ten benefits of testing and their applications to educational practice. In J. Mestre & B. Ross (Eds.), *Psychology of learning and motivation: Cognition in education*, (pp. 1-36). Oxford: Elsevier.



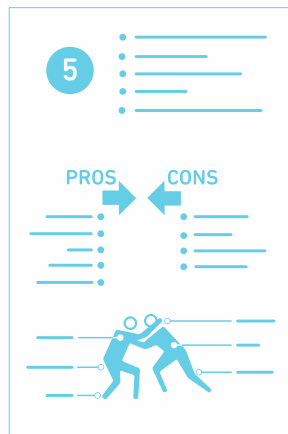
Dual Coding

HOLD ON!

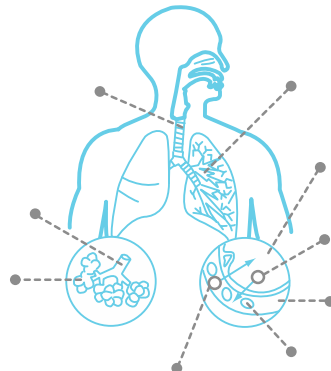
Try to come up with different ways to represent the information visually, for example an infographic, a timeline, a cartoon strip, or a diagram of parts that work together.



INFOGRAPHIC



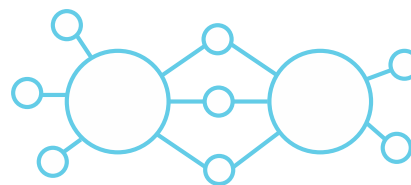
DIAGRAM



CARTOON STRIP



GRAPHIC ORGANIZER



TIMELINE





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LEARN TO STUDY USING...

Elaboration

EXPLAIN AND DESCRIBE IDEAS WITH MANY DETAILS

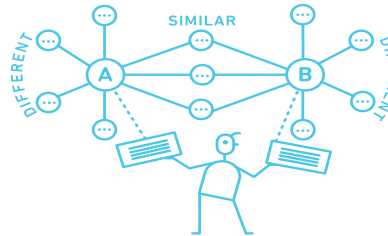


HOW TO DO IT

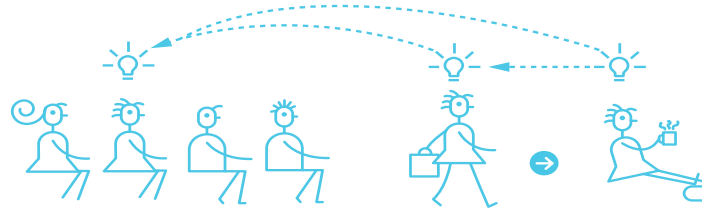
Ask yourself questions while you are studying about how things work and why, and then find the answers in your class materials and discuss them with your classmates.



As you elaborate, make connections between different ideas to explain how they work together. Take two ideas and think of ways they are similar and different.



Describe how the ideas you are studying apply to your own experiences or memories. As you go through your day, make connections to the ideas you are learning in class.



HOLD ON!



Make sure the way you are explaining and describing an idea is accurate. Don't overextend the elaborations, and always check your class materials or ask your teacher.



Work your way up so that you can describe and explain without looking at your class materials.



RESEARCH

[Read more about elaboration as a study strategy](#)

McDaniel, M. A., & Donnelly, C. M. (1996). Learning with analogy and elaborative interrogation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 88*, 508-519.

Wong, B. Y. L. (1985). Self-questioning instructional research: A review. *Review of Educational Research, 55*, 227-268.

Practice!!!

How to prepare? Problem-based tests

Create a “cheat” sheet with formulas and where you would typically apply them as well as key terms that can be used to reduce the load on your working memory during the exam



Using the GUESS Method to Solve Problems (Blank)

Problem solving courses like those in Math, Chemistry, Physics, Engineering and Statistics require a lot of practice and application of concepts in order for students to be successful. At the same time, some students struggle with these types of courses because they do not know where to start, or they do not have a method for completing the recommended practice problems. The GUESS method (Given, Unknown, Equations, Set-up, Solve) is an easy to remember acronym that breaks practice problems into five basic steps. Use the following template for solving your own practice problems.

Given:	
Unknown:	
Equations:	
Set-up	
Solve	

You have the tools. We help you use them.

How to prepare?

Take-home and online essay exams

Develop

- Develop a list of themes and concepts and organize in ways that encourage connections/links between ideas

Create

- Create an index for easy searching and use post-it notes so you can easily access key concepts/ideas

Check

- Check with instructor on what sources they expect you to use and their expectations around answers i.e. use of citations, use of quotations, and length and depth of response

Take-home exam advice

- Don't write more than you need to
- Pay close attention to the question and use it as your guide
- Use sources effectively, but don't use more than required
- Give yourself enough time and take breaks!
- Try to draft within the 'normal' time limit
- Save frequently!
- Review and revise as needed



Before you write, prepare!



Exam!

Prepare your technology

- Check to make sure you can access your [UM email account](#)
- Check to make sure the device you will be using (laptop, desktop, etc.) is [compatible with UM Learn](#). If you don't have access to a computer, contact your instructor immediately
- Check to make sure you can access your [UM Learn account](#)
- Check that you have sufficient bandwidth, and turn off any programs that could reduce available bandwidth

<http://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/academic-supports/final-exam-supports-students>

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Prepare your technology

- Login, select a course for which you have an upcoming exam, and make sure you can find the quiz tab (in your UM Learn course: Assessments > Quizzes) OR check with instructor on the appropriate location for uploading your responses.
- Note: For students that will take the exam from a time zone other than Central Time: Confirm your actual exam start time – UM Learn and the official exam schedule are set in the [Central Time Zone](#).

<https://uvacollab.screenstepslive.com/s/help/m/assessments/l/405234-essential-tips-for-taking-online-tests-in-uvacollab>

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Prepare your space

- Find a clock or watch and make sure you pay attention to time
- Check all technology well ahead of time to make sure that it works and that you can access the exam during the designated time
- Eliminate (or minimize) distractions – people, phone, sounds
- Make sure all allowed resources/materials are handy
- Get comfortable! Think about hydration and snacks, as well as comfortable seating and adequate light and space.

Prepare for the format

- Is the time you take to complete the test tracked? Will that time be displayed while you are writing?
- Can you save and return if interrupted?
- Can you answer questions out of sequence?
- Can you change answers? How?
- Can you move back and forth in the exam?
- For short and long answer questions, can you create and format your answer with a word processor, then copy and paste into the text box for the test question?

Questions quoted from: "Taking Online or Computerized Tests" who cite in turn Adams, D. (2015, January 28). Preparing students for next-generation assessments. Retrieved May 21, 2015, from <http://blog.edmentum.com/preparing-students-next-generation-assessments>
Landsberger, J. (2015). Taking online tests. Retrieved May 21, 2015, from <http://www.studygs.net/online/onlinetest.htm>

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Writing the Exam



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Avoiding academic misconduct in online exams

- Treat an online exam like an in-person exam, and assume you are being monitored.
 - Student information and communication is tracked through both UM Learn and by faculties.
- If you consult any source, ensure you are properly quoting, paraphrasing and citing.
 - Memorizing information prior to exam and including it without citation is considered plagiarism.
- Read exam instructions very carefully so you know the expectations, including what materials are permitted.
 - Do not ask your classmates. Only your instructor can set the expectation.



Avoiding academic misconduct in online exams

- Work independently on your exam, and do not discuss your answers with other students.
 - Faculties are adept at identifying inappropriate collaboration through matching wording, answer structure, wrong answer patterns etc.
- You should not be re-using previous exam answers or assignments (unless explicitly permitted).
- Do not take pictures or screenshots of the exam for any reason.
- Note that academic misconduct (i.e., plagiarism) within a testing environment carries higher penalties than on a class assignment.

Writing Multiple Choice exams

- Identify how much time you have for each question
- Have scrap paper available so you can take notes on questions, jot down thoughts, and eliminate wrong answers
- Have a blank piece of paper that you can use to cover up the responses and try to answer the stem question before you look at them.
- Review your responses, if that is allowed.

Writing problem-based questions

- Have technology available that will allow you to take pictures of the problems solved – either done on computer or by hand
- Give yourself time to deal with uploading the image
- Do not wait to upload images. Upload as you go.



Writing short and long answer responses

- Have scrap paper available so you can take notes on questions, jot down thoughts.
- Outline your response before you start – this works like a second brain and you can refer to it as you write your response
- If you can use a word processing program, draft your responses there, save, and then copy and paste



Writing Take-home Exams

- Perfection is the enemy of done – don't do more than needed or expected
- Pay close attention to the question and use it as your guide
- Use sources effectively -- don't use more than required
- Give yourself enough time and take breaks!
- Try to draft within the 'normal' time limit
- Save frequently!
- Review and revise as needed



Online Exam Emergencies

- **If your web browser freezes**, close the browser. Open a new session and reconnect to your exam. UM Learn will allow you to continue.
- **If your computer crashes**, restart computer and continue back into UM Learn.
- **If your exam is in progress** and you need **IMMEDIATE SUPPORT, CALL 204-474-8600 or toll free (North America) 1-844-626-1756. UM Learn experts will be available** to provide immediate service and a quick resolution to your inquiry. Listen for the “online exam support option” and follow the prompts to report your issue. **DO NOT** send e-mails to get assistance - the response time will be slow, while staff are resourcing the telephone lines.
- When you can, please **email your instructor** so that they are made aware that you have had an issue.

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Notice:

The Academic Learning Centre will continue to provide academic supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. All Academic Learning Centre supports including individual tutoring (in writing, content, study skills), Supplemental Instructions (SI) sessions, and workshops will be provided online until further notice. Student staff are also being hired for Fall of 2020.

More information ►

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Learning & Study

[Handouts](#)
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Academic integrity

The University of Manitoba takes academic integrity seriously. As a member of the [International Centre for Academic Integrity](#), the University defines academic integrity as a commitment to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage.

On this page:

[Student resources](#)

[Academic misconduct](#)

[Faculty and staff resources](#)

Academic supports

Academic integrity

- [How an academic misconduct investigation works](#)

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