

The 5-Day Study Plan for 8-Week Courses

When reviewing for an exam, it's important to space out your review, ideally over a period of approximately 5 days, but during summer courses, everything is on a more condensed timeline, including reviewing for tests. This plan is designed to help you keep up with the fast pace of shortened courses and do as well as possible on your exams.

Keys to a Good Study Plan

The same principles apply to creating a study plan over the summer as creating a study plan during the regular semester. Those keys are:

1. Space out your learning.
2. Divide material so you can work on it in chunks.
3. Each day, prepare one chunk of information and review the previous days' material.
4. Use active learning strategies to study the material (see chart below).
5. Use self-testing techniques to monitor your review.

8-10 hours of study and review may be required to get an A or a B on a typical semesterly exam, but this is just a general guideline. You may need to allow for more study time for a summer course, since you have to learn everything more quickly, or more time for more difficult classes.

Start early!

This is the most important key!

More than any other strategy or technique, the key to doing well on exams is starting early and using short, frequent study sessions. This is especially important for summer courses. Remember that the usual subtle review you get in class, whether that's through clicker questions or just the professor mentioning old concepts during lecture, isn't necessarily available during summer courses, so you have to provide that review yourself. For summer courses, it's best to **start reviewing material the day you learn it.** For example, if your lecture is at 10:30am, go to lecture and take notes, and then sometime in the afternoon, go back through your notes and review them actively (see chart below).

Avoid cramming!

Cramming doesn't help you remember the material in the long-run, or even for tomorrow's exam.

You typically won't remember what you tried to learn the night before the exam, so it's much better to space out your review. Keep in mind that, for prerequisite courses or for courses in a sequence (e.g. Chem I and II), you'll need this information later, and cramming it into your brain in one night isn't going to help you recall it a few months from now. It's easy to put-off all your homework and studying until the last minute for summer courses, but if you wait to start until a day or two before the exam, you'll have way too much material and work to get through. If you are stuck in a situation where you have to cram, it's more important to **focus on remembering and solidifying the information you already know** rather than trying to teach yourself new information. Information learned the night before isn't likely to stick with you, even for the next day's exam, let alone in a few months.

Get Organized!

Split up the material into manageable chunks and systematically review each section.

The idea behind the 5-Day Study Plan is to **divide up the material you need to study into 4 roughly equal parts, then review each one.** Here, we've labeled them A, B, C, and D, with A being the oldest material and D being the most recently covered material. Once you've divided up the material, each day, you'll prepare one chunk of material and review the previous days' material. For example, on the first day, you'll prepare A, then on the second day, you'll prepare B and review A, and on the third day you'll prepare C and review both A and B, etc. It's important to plan out your preparation and review strategies ahead of time so that you already have a plan when you sit down to study. If you just tell yourself that you'll review for a couple hours in the afternoon, you might sit down to study and then not be able to get started because you're not sure what to focus on or how to study. If you've already made a plan for yourself, you can sit down and get right to studying.

A Step-By-Step Guide to Making a Summer Study Plan: 8 Week Courses

Follow the steps below to prepare yourself for your exams and stay on top of your 8-week long summer courses.

Step 1: Choose a Same-Day Preparation Technique

In courses that last eight weeks, you'll probably have an exam every two weeks, so you want to start reviewing the material the same day that you learn it. One good same-day preparation technique could be to rewrite your notes after that day's lecture. This gives you an opportunity to reorganize your notes and incorporate information from other sources (e.g. the textbook). Any of the preparation techniques in the table below would work well too!

Step 2: Divide the Material

For such short courses, you should probably organize the material chronologically, where A is the first material you cover that week and D is the last. List your four chunks of study material here:

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

Step 3: Select Preparation and Review Strategies

For each chunk of material, choose one or two preparation and review strategies. Make sure that the review strategies you choose match the preparation strategies you've chosen, e.g. if you prepare flashcards, review by going through the flashcards a couple of times. Each day, you will prepare one section of material to review the following days, and you'll review the material you've already prepared.

Preparation strategies	Review 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 re-marked text
List 20 topics that may be on the exam	Recite the list of 20 and explain each topic
Do problems	Do "missed" problems
Make an outline	Recite notes from recall cues
Summarize material	Recite 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 group members

Step 4: Write It Down

It's important that you write out your study plan because writing something down makes us much more likely to do it, and it will be easier to look at what you've written to remember how you planned to study, rather than trying to hold it in your mind for several days. For eight-week courses, you can also choose to take a day off, if you have enough time. Taking a day off isn't a bad idea, as it gives the information some time to settle in your brain and it gives your mind a rest before your exam. For example, you might prepare and review material for four days, take one day off, and then review all the material the day before the exam. Just make sure that you plan in a day to take off if you want to do so.

Day 1: _____	Day 2: _____	Day 3: _____	Day 4: _____	Day 5: _____
Prepare Part A—2 hrs.	Prepare Part B—2 hrs. Review Part A—30 min.	Prepare Part C—1.5 hrs. Review Part B—30 min. Review Part A—15 min.	Prepare Part D—1 hr. Review Part C—30 min. Review Part B—15 min. Review Part A—15 min.	Review Part D—25 min. Review Part C—15 min. Review Part B—10 min. Review Part A—10 min. Self-test on all parts—1 hr.
Total: 2 hours	Total: 2.5 hours	Total: 2 hrs. 15 min.	Total: ~ 2 hours	Total: ~ 2 hours
Prepare 1. 2.	Prepare 1. 2. Review 1. 2.	Prepare 1. 2. Review 1. 2. 3. 4.	Prepare 1. 2. Review 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	Review 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. Self-Test (methods)

Example

This is an example 5-Day Study Plan for an 8-week course where the exam is on Friday.

Day 1: Sunday	Day 2: Monday	Day 3: Tuesday	Day 4: Wednesday	Day 5: Thursday
Prepare Part A—2 hrs.	Prepare Part B—2 hrs. Review Part A—30 min.	Prepare Part C—1.5 hrs. Review Part B—30 min. Review Part A—15 min.	Prepare Part D—1 hr. Review Part C—30 min. Review Part B—15 min. Review Part A—15 min.	Review Part D—25 min. Review Part C—15 min. Review Part B—10 min. Review Part A—10 min. Self-test on all parts—1 hr.
Total: 2 hours	Total: 2.5 hours	Total: 2 hrs. 15 min.	Total: ~ 2 hours	Total: ~ 2 hours
Prepare 1. predict essay questions and brainstorm responses 2. write study sheets	Prepare 1. do textbook practice questions 2. draw concept maps Review 1. answer predicted essay questions 2. annotate study sheets	Prepare 1. write brief summaries 2. make flashcards Review 1. critique essay answers 2. recite study sheets 3. redo textbook questions done incorrectly 4. redraw concept maps	Prepare 1. list 20 topics that may be on exam and explain 2. prepare material for study group Review 1. bullet point outline essay answers 2. recite study sheets 3. summarize topics from textbook questions 4. redraw concept maps 5. recite summaries 6. practice flashcards	Review 1. explain 20 topics 2. explain material to study group 3. recite study sheets 4. redraw concept maps 5. recite summaries 6. practice flashcards Self-Test: do unit review