Believe it or not, it is time to begin preparing for final exam season. It always sneaks up, but if you begin preparations now, you will be in great shape once May arrives. Take a few moments to read this Academic Success Guide. In it you will find tips on how to prepare for the spring semester final exam season, a guide to reading productively, suggestions from peers on how to succeed during final exams, and a list of campus resources that you should utilize to ensure that you are performing at your highest level. In the Department of Resident Life, we are always here to support your academic ambitions and to be a promoter of your success, but the strength and forward propulsion comes from you.

*Good luck on spring finals! You’ve got this!*
Exam Preparation

Preparing for midterms and final exams is a process that happens over time. You should be preparing for exams every day. Space out your studying and utilize different preparation techniques to achieve success. Try out the following techniques to improve your study and exam preparation game this semester.

• Create an exam season preparation plan. Include dates, times, and locations of exams along with the type of final (take-home, paper, multiple choice, essay, short answer, etc.). Note how much time and what materials you will need to successfully prepare for each final exam or assignment.

• Spaced repetition is the practice of studying the same information, repeatedly, over time. The more times your brain sees specific information, especially if there is time in between touchpoints, the more likely you are to retain the information.

• Take notes by hand in class. Take 5 minutes directly after class to polish your notes, fill in gaps, and mark information that may be on a test or needed for an assignment. Use this information to build a practice exam or a flashcard deck.

• Do you procrastinate? Challenge yourself to do one small thing at a time. Start by putting your book on the desk, then challenge yourself to get your syllabus out of your bag. It might be overwhelming to think about your task as a whole, but give yourself little challenges and you will always be moving forward.

• Outline your papers early. Make sure that your outline includes your research and sources, not just topics and ideas. The more thorough you make your outline, the easier your paper will be to write.
Exam Preparation

• Quiz yourself! Use paper flashcards, quizlet, a friend, practice tests, and whatever/whoever else you can find to quiz yourself on information. Quizzing is one of the most effective forms of studying.

• Create a study group for your most difficult courses. Use these groups to review content that you are not feeling confident about and also to cement your own learning by teaching content to others.

• Between now and finals, you will need to carefully schedule your days to ensure that you have adequate time to prepare for exams. Set the expectation with family and friends that you will need to study hard and that you might not be able to come home on the weekends, chat on the phone for hours, or play host during a surprise visit.

• Set up personal accountability measures for yourself. Will you spend 90 minutes in the library each day? Will you complete non-final exam assignments by a certain date so you can get a jump start on preparing for finals? Will you set up study dates with friends to ensure you get work done? Decide what will work best for you and make a commitment.
Tips for Coping with Test Anxiety

You will not learn information through osmosis or last-minute cramming. Learning is a process that takes time, planning, and a good amount of effort. Creating a plan of attack for each of your courses, as well as for you as a whole student, is a great place to start the process of learning. For each class, a study plan should include the following items:

- Begin preparing for your exams two to three weeks in advance.
- Simulate taking an exam by working through a practice test under similar environmental and time constraints to your actual exam.
- Read the instructions thoroughly and look over the entire exam before beginning.
- Answer the test questions that you know first and then go back to the harder questions.
- Take time to outline essays before you begin writing. Read the prompt twice!
- Stay focused on your test. Don't look at other students. If possible, seat yourself in a place where you will not be distracted.
- If you think you are beginning to feel anxious, stop and give yourself one minute to simply breathe. Consciously relax your muscles one at a time. Then, resume taking your test with a more relaxed body and mind.
- Get sleep, eat healthful meals, and exercise. Handling stress and anxiety is easier if your body is healthy.
- Visit the UMD Counseling Center for assistance in coping with test related anxiety.
Creating Faculty Connections

One of the most important things you can do as the semester starts to wind down is to create connections with your faculty members. Not only are faculty members great resources for learning, they are an amazing group of people who have the ability to help you discover your passions and guide you in turning those passions into a career. Get to know your faculty by using some of the tips below.

- Make contact with your faculty during office hours for help with understanding course content. You could also ask if they have any suggestions about the best way to study for their class.
- Talk to your faculty about research opportunities they may have open to undergraduates in the future.
- Learn the class material. Do the course readings. Answer questions in class. Engaging with faculty during class shows that you are truly interested in the material, and may open up opportunities for you in the future.
- We said it before and we will say it again, GO TO OFFICE HOURS!
Reading Comprehension Skills

Reading for class can be hard and sometimes it can be downright frustrating! Do you spend a lot of time reading the same paragraph over and over and still don’t walk away with good information? When you are tested on material from course readings, do you find that you remember reading about the topic, but cannot remember the content? Well, you are not alone! Try out the following reading comprehension strategies to get more out of your course readings.

Preview:
Previewing is a strategy that helps you to be more engaged with the passages you are about to read by giving you context. Previewing a text could mean looking at chapter titles, section headings, bold or italicized words, graphs and charts, or a chapter summary. In a non-textbook, previewing could mean reading the first sentence of each paragraph.

Curiosity Preview:
Come up with questions to answer before you begin reading. When your curiosity is piqued, you are more likely to stay on task, be motivated to read, and not let your mind wander.

Paraphrasing Like a College Student:
- Read the first paragraph and write a short summary.
- Read the second paragraph and write a short summary.
- Put the two summaries together into one.
- Do this with each paragraph, summarize and combine.
- This is a slower way to read, but it is more efficient in the long run because you will have fewer false starts and spend less time going back to find information that has been forgotten when trying to complete future assignments.
Things I Wish I Had Known

Check out the following knowledge and tips from experienced students about how to be successful at UMD.

🌈 Use Your Time Productively and Reward Yourself

"Reward yourself after you study. I like to give myself 20 minutes of Netflix after every two hours I spend studying. If I am productive and utilize my study time to actually study, the exam will be easier and when it is all done, it is all done and I can be proud!"

-Cece Thompson, Junior Criminology/Criminal Justice and African American Studies Major

🌈 Study Early and Often

"Study before the week of the final exam. Finals week tends to be really busy with surprises and if you start studying well in advance, you will not only do better on your tests, you will be less stressed."

-Ryan Nottingham, Sophomore Biology Major

🌈 Make a Plan and Stick To It

"Actually study! Block out distractions, make an amazing study playlist, figure out when you do your best work, and get down to business. Set goals and hold yourself accountable. If you don’t have a plan and don’t commit to getting work done, it probably won't happen and you will not do well."

-Marta Curiel, Senior Linguistics Major

🌈 Be a Teacher

"Sometimes the best form of studying is teaching. Teach your friends, your little cousins, or your dog. It does not matter. Teaching forces me to learn the material to a level where I not only know the answers to practice problems, but where I can answer questions about process. This depth of knowledge means that I can answer all of the curveballs my professors throw at me on exams."

- Jared Gandy, Sophomore Undeclared Major
HELPFUL RESOURCES

Math Success Program - Utilize this service to help you develop a better understanding of mathematical concepts or to get help on a specific problem. You can also use the program as a space to study with help just a table away. The Math Success Program runs Sunday-Thursday 6-9pm in the Oakland Hall Academic Enrichment Center.

Tutoring.umd.edu - Tutoring.umd.edu brings many of the university's different tutoring options together into one easy-to-search space. Check out this website if you are looking for an on-campus tutor or tutoring program. Tutoring.umd.edu is also a great place to find online resources about topics such as study strategies, organization, time management, test taking, and many more.

Oral Communications Center - The Oral Communications Center offers peer consulting for presentations, speeches, and other modes of oral communication. They also offer interactive workshops on a variety of different communication skills.

Guided Study Sessions - Guided Study Sessions offer regularly scheduled review/study sessions for traditionally difficult courses. Learn with a trained group leader who facilitates a collaborative learning process. Attend every session or only once, the choice is up to you.

Academic Success & Tutorial Services - ASTS provides tutoring for courses in which large number of students have traditionally struggled to complete. This includes courses such as accounting, biology, chemistry, computer science, economics, mathematics, philosophy, psychology, and statistics.

The Writing Center - The Writing Center can help you to gather your thoughts on a writing assignment or answer questions about things such as citations, grammar, and content quality. The Writing Center is not a proofreading service, but can help you with specific questions about mechanics. Try making an appointment to plan your paper before you start writing, or if you are struggling to organize your thoughts. Try an online or in-person appointment.

Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Education - OMSE offers tutoring in many first and second year courses. They also offer academic support to students that may be struggling or are simply looking for direction.

Keystone Center - The Keystone Center is a place where engineering students can go to work on homework or projects. It is staffed with upper level engineering students that can help with engineering fundamentals courses.
Math Department Tutoring - The Department of Mathematics offers tutoring during the day for many of its large courses. Check out the schedule of offerings and plan ahead to ensure you fully understand the concepts presented in class.

Alpha Chi Sigma Chemistry Tutoring - Utilize this service to help you develop a better understanding of chemistry concepts or to get help on a specific problem.

SPS Tutoring for Physics Majors - Tutors are available to help students with the introductory sequence, required math courses, modern physics, and quantum physics I. Get help with questions about homework or general questions about physics-related course material.

Slawsky Clinic - The Slawsky Clinic provides physics tutoring for students on a walk-in, first-come, first-served basis. The clinic operates primarily for the 100 and 200 level physics classes. The tutors can answer additional physics questions as their time and knowledge permit. The tutors are retired professors, scientists, and engineers.

Campus Quiet Spaces - Your bedroom may not be an area that is conducive to study due to noise level or the number of distractions present. The Campus Quiet Spaces website lists out many of the quiet spaces on campus that you can utilize to study or hold a group meeting.

Veterans STEM Assistance Program - Veteran Student Life’s Veterans STEM Assistance Program works with student veterans seeking to meet their academic needs in the STEM field, in addition to assisting veterans' readjustment to academic life.