

Ideally, you'll have enough time to study for your exams, but there may be situations when you need to study at the last minute. If this happens, it might be tempting to try to read everything (and fast) because you're afraid of being asked about a topic you haven't looked at. But remember: reading a large amount of material at a frenzied pace won't help your understanding or retention.

The techniques we offer below won't yield comprehensive learning, but can be useful in short-term study scenarios. So take a deep breath, relax, and let's go.

CHOOSE WHAT'S IMPORTANT:

You won't have time to study everything, so you'll have to make some decisions about what to prioritize:

- Review previous quizzes or exams. Did the questions come from lecture notes, readings, or videos? Was there a focus on vocab, knowing concepts, or solving problems?
- Take a practice test or answer some questions from homework, online, or the textbook. Take note of a.) what you already know, b.) what's familiar but needs more practice, and c.) what you don't know at all. Prioritize items in the last two categories.
- Study some important things from each week/section of the course. Instructors often balance questions from all of the material covered. **CAVEAT ALERT:** If an instructor has told you to focus on certain chapters or topics, do that instead!

TAKE TIME TO PLAN:

It may not feel like you have time to make a plan, but this step is key. Even 15 minutes of planning can help you feel more organized and can position you to prioritize the most important things.

- Take a quick assessment of how much time you have available for studying, divide that into sections, and make a rough sketch of how much time you'll put towards different areas of focus. *Example:* Two hours at 3 pm for the content from week 8.
- Try using the hour-by-hour [Weekly Schedule](#) to plot out your study plan. And don't forget to look for small pockets of time to study, too: rehearse steps to solving a process while you shower, or quiz yourself on key vocab while you wait for the bus.

USE YOUR TIME TO PRACTICE:

Many people wait until they feel confident with the material to test themselves, but research shows that answering practice questions and doing practice problems is one of the top strategies for mastering material—even if you don't know the answer and have to look it up. So, if you're short on time, spend it practicing! When you know the answer, great. And when you don't, look it up and try it again.

Examples of testing activities include (and for more ideas, check out [Make it Stick](#)):

- Answer questions from the text or lecture
- Rework homework problems
- Take practice exams & re-take previous midterms/exams
- Write and exchange questions with classmates
- Teach concepts to others, and have them ask questions