

Exam & Paper prep

Blocking out the Time
Study Techniques & Tools



SCHOOL OF
NURSING
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

Planning : Blocking out the time

Exams

- Determine topics on exam (usually from a study guide or PowerPoints)
- Block out on a planner what days you will focus on what topics . Choosing at least one topic per day is helpful and keeps “traction” on the topics
- Use practice exams . Prep U practice questions , and practice questions (as applicable) in the text books that have them
- When taking practice exams , keep a “gap” list of what topics you answered incorrectly

Papers

- two weeks before the dues date read the assignment
- Pay special attention to the rubric , which will give insight to what various sections need and how they will be graded

Remembering New Content

Essay method – good for processes

- What did you know about the condition /process before taking class
- Relate to a personal experience where possible (family member etc)
- Write what you have learned that is new to you about the condition , and how would you apply that knowledge to patient care

Grid /template creation and practicing recall after sleeping on the information

- Rewriting the next day from memory “greases” long term recall -the more you “grease”, the quicker the information will come during the exam - and you will know what information comes easily and what needs to be studied in more depth - example 362 system assessment

Drawing diagrams (blood flow through the heart for example and label all the valves , vessels , sections)

Create your own comprehensive questions about topics in the exam

Study Techniques

- Compare and contrast 2 or more diseases , drugs , or other categories
- Practice recall by writing out content then rewriting from memory the next day
 - Diseases
 - Meds
 - Assessment
- Concept map : Create a diagram (wheel and spoke) with a major concept in the center and related concepts and facts on the spokes
- Teach Back : Partner with another student or clinical and teach back to them the material you are studying

Compare and Contrast

Identify similar conditions

Compare and contrast across standard dimensions such as

- Cause /pathophysiology /risk factors
- Assessment findings (include labs , vitals)
- Medications (therapeutic effect , Side effect to assess , patient meds teaching)
- Treatments (dietary , lifestyle)
- Nursing Care required (emphasis on safety , complications, patient teaching)

Practice recall – rewrite the comparison from memory the next day (and identify what you did not recall so that you can study that more)

Teach back with a friend

Example Tools to Practice Recall (full grids are attached in Blackboard in thew Caps web site)

Disease grid

Drug class grid

Assessment grid

Disease Grid –compare similar diseases

Test recall by rewriting from memory the next day

	Disease 1	Disease 2
Pathophysiology & Risk factors		
Assessments Findings include labs		
Medications used (therapeutic effect and pt. teaching)		
Treatments (include dietary /lifestyle)		
Nursing care required (safety issues , potential complications , pt teaching)		
Other		

Drug Class – compare and contrast drug classes (such as beta blockers vs calcium channel blockers)

	Drug class :	Drug Class :
Drugs in class		
Diagnosis used for		
Adverse Affects		
Labs to watch		
Drug or food interactions		
Contraindications and black box warnings		
Special considerations		

System Assessment Grid

such as Cardiac & Respiratory

	System 1	System 2
Landmarks and underlying anatomy		
Types of assessment , description of technique and what it means		
Normal and abnormal findings		
Normal affects of aging on assessment		
Patient teaching		

Chunking the work

Identify all the work due (including quizzes and exams) for the next 8 – 10- days in all courses

Choose the day to get each item done before it is due

Write the topic /assignment and the day you commit to getting it done in your planner (

Rebalance plan as needed

More on exams :

Test anxiety

Breathing techniques – 4 square

Imaging (what would a successful exam experience look and feel like)

Special locations – what works best for you in a room –in a corner , in the front , by the door)

Importance of sleep (excessive caffeine to compensate for lack of sleep may increase anxiety)

Eating breakfast (digestion engages our parasympathetic nervous system , which will decrease anxiety – more about that in Pathophysiology)

More on exams : Decoding

Read the question slowly

Without looking at the answers , reword what you think the question is asking

If you scrap paper , write down what you know about the topic (before looking at the answers)

Be alert for phrases that may be confusing such as “how would you know the medication or therapy was effective for this patient “

More on exams : Grade is lower than desired

Do a reflection of what you could do differently next time

Ask to meet with the professor to review wrong answers (if the exam grade was <73%) – look for patterns in the wrong answer – for example

- Was the question content familiar to you ?
- Did you read the question correctly ?
- Did you run out of time ?

Each of these insights may point to different refinement in your study techniques

Questions ?

To request a CAPS session

CAPS website : <https://son.rochester.edu/current-students/caps/index.html>

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