

## HINTS FOR FINAL EXAM

Doing well on an exam depends almost entirely upon what you do **before** the actual exam.  
Much of the following will apply to exams in other courses also.

### START NOW:

- Re-do PQ and exam problems you missed. Check your answers with the instructor, another student, or a tutor.
- Practice using the Study Plan in MathXL.
- Work all the problems in the practice final exams. Make sure you understand them.
- Make study lists, outlines, learning maps, “cheat sheet” summaries, and/or flashcards.
- You may want to use mnemonic devices or acronyms for remembering: FOIL = first, outside, inside, last
- Work with a study buddy.
- Organize the information into different types of problems and the step-by-step processes for solving each. Compare and contrast each problem type.
- Remind yourself of the pitfalls in different problems – either because the problem has a detail that you must check or because you frequently make particular errors.
- Study in increments, not last-minute or in late-night marathons.
- Organize your study time. Set goals for yourself and reward yourself for reaching them.
- Take breaks while studying so that the information will sink in.
- Sleep a full night after studying and then look back at what you studied. Your dreaming mind will either have solidified the information, or discovered questions you need to ask and clarify.
- Don’t forget to eat when you’re studying. Eat real meals, not just candy or sodas.
- Develop a time-management strategy for the exam. (See below for more on this.)
- Decide how you will mark incomplete problems and problems you’ve finished but doubt are correct. (e.g. 0 and x).

### ABOUT THE FINAL EXAM:

- On the Math 20, 35, 45, 60 exams, there will be 50 questions to be answered on a scantron. All the problems are of equal value. Your scantron will be provided.
- In other classes, ask your teachers if they will describe the exams so you know what to expect.

### THE NIGHT BEFORE THE EXAM:

- Plan time for a full night’s sleep, breakfast, time to drive or ride to school and time for using the restroom before the exam. If you have other commitments before the exam, plan enough time to get to the exam early.
- Know what time your exam begins and ends. Subtract 15 minutes from the total time and split the remaining time in half. Make a note of the time when you should be half-done and the point when you should be doing your final checking.
- For Math 45 and higher: check the batteries in your calculator and replace them if they’re low or old.
- Get a watch or clock that does not beep – not a cell phone.
- Get extra pencils, a portable pencil sharpener or extra leads, and a good eraser.
- If you have more than one exam on the same day, pack a snack and a bottle of water to eat and drink between exams.
- Get a good night of sleep.

### THE DAY OF THE EXAM:

- Eat breakfast.
- Bring the pencils, leads, sharpener, eraser, calculator, scantron, watch or clock, snack and water.
- Bring a sweater or coat. Your testing room may be cold.
- Be on time. Panic about being late doesn’t help your mind and memory.

(over)

#### DURING THE EXAM:

- Look through the entire exam quickly before you start. Note what problem is half-way through the exam.
- Read the instructions.
- Raise your hand and ask if you don't understand the problem. The instructor will clarify the problem or the instructions, but will not tell you how to do problems.
- Write neatly, especially if your exam is free-response.
- Work quickly, then come back to check your work.
- Do not dwell on problems where you're unsure or are worth fewer points. Maximize your points on problems that you know well and on problems worth many points.
- If you get stuck, mark the problem number and come back to it later. On a scantron exam, keep your list on a sheet of scratch paper.
- If you finish a problem but aren't sure it's right, mark the problem on your list and come back to it.
- If you start to panic, take a deep breath—a low, slow, breath. This will calm your body and let your brain get back to math instead of worrying about whether your cells have enough oxygen.
- On a free-response exam, if you think the answer's wrong, write that. Sometimes it's worth partial credit.
- If you think an answer is wrong, but don't know what to write instead, DO NOT ERASE! A wrong answer is almost always better than no answer at all.
- When you get through the exam, return to the problems you marked as incomplete and work on those. Go first to those you can get, then to the harder ones.
- Ask for more scratch paper if you need it.
- Once you've finished the incomplete problems, return to those you doubted were correct. Once you've finished the incomplete and doubted problems, go through the entire test and check your work.
- Read the instructions again and check that you followed them.
- Use all of the exam time. If you finish checking, go back and check again.