“Finals”

4 Lifesaving Tips to Get Through Finals This Semester

Isn’t it absolutely dreadful how finals make us want to pull our hair out, throw a brick through a glass window or cry into a pillow? And yet, around the same time every year, they come back to haunt us. For approximately two to three weeks, professors bombard students with tests to study for and papers to write. Individuals have vastly differently study habits for a reason; they’re individuals! They all learn differently. But I am convinced that the four tips I outlined below can and will be helpful to each and every one of you. However, don’t be afraid to tweak them; when reading these, you may even come up with a brand-new study technique of your own.

1. **Phone a friend or family member**

You’ve tried planners and to-do lists. But somehow, at the end of the day, you still have unfinished items on your list. You freak out, knowing you’ll have to carry over assignments to tomorrow. Avoid the headaches and breakdowns. Call your best friend from home or your mom or dad — preferably in the morning. Before you call, make a preliminary list of tasks you definitely want to accomplish that day, and make it realistic. Otherwise, you’ll feel bad, maybe even guilty, for not getting everything done that you’d planned to. When you finally dial a number, make your intentions clear. Perhaps say something like, “Hi Mom, I’m studying for finals, and I’m going to tell you what I’d like to do today to prepare for them.” I suggest calling a close friend or relative so that your to-do list will be established. Later that day, after you hopefully achieve your goals, you can call once again to inform your close friend or parents that you did, in fact, accomplish every objectivethat you’d initially told them you would. Not only will you feel incredible for doing so, but no doubt, you’ll receive words of encouragement or praise, which always feels awesome. At least, I think it does.

2. **Give yourself incentive**

When you were little, you probably did just about anything for a piece of candy. Does the same hold true today? Try it. Purchase a candy bar or write yourself a note that says something like, “After I do X, Y and Z, I can eat this Hershey bar, watch an episode of ‘Bob’s Burgers’ or hang out with my friend for an hour.” Then, find a quiet place, or anywhere you feel comfortable, and do your best work. Set a time limit for each task. Perhaps you’re creating an outline for a history essay and preparing for a presentation in psych. Set a timer on your phone — maybe 30 minutes for the outline and 45 minutes for the presentation. Your phone timer goes off. Did you finish writing the outline and prepping for the presentation? If so, fantastic! Enjoy your reward. If not, take a breather. Go for a walk to get some fresh air. Then, come back and regroup. Set a new timer for the tasks you must complete, and remember your incentive. This trick has done wonders for me, and it will for you too.

3. **Stay healthy, but don’t make extreme changes**

You’ve all heard the saying, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Eating right and exercising are important practices to adopt. Some people will tell you to eat more healthily and exercise during times of stress, like during finals. I would take a slightly different approach and say, “You do you.” Changing your patterns, even for a short period of time, may actually make you more on edge, as you’d be going outside of your comfort zone. For instance, forcing yourself to do or eat things you despise with a passion — like running on the treadmill or eating tomatoes — just because of the health benefits most likely won’t boost your study habits or increase your exam grades. I’m not saying to eat junk food 24/7, because eating nutritiously is important. What you should take away from this is that just because a tactic works for someone else does not necessarily mean it will work for you. And that’s OK! Do what makes you feel good. You can’t possibly do well on your finals if you don’t take care of you, and that includes your mental health.

4. **Reach out to your professors**

While professors are basically the reason why college students are stressed beyond belief during finals week, they are also your biggest supporters. Your professors want you to succeed. I know how cheesy that must sound, but it is 100% true. They are invaluable resources to finalize that A you’ve been striving for all semester. Talk to your professors after class, go to their office hours or make an appointment to meet with them outside of office hours if they don’t work with your schedule; they would be glad to accommodate you. Believe it or not, your professors enjoy working with students outside of the classroom. You do not need to do every single task alone in your room or huddled in a corner of the library. I cannot stress this enough. Don’t believe me? I have a 10-page English essay due in two weeks, and I emailed my professor asking if we could discuss my research proposal. She responded within the hour, giving me multiple days and times to choose from. I’m also taking a Modern European class right now, and I have two essays due on Dec. 17. Not only was I able to meet with my professor multiple times to discuss my ideas, but she said she is more than happy to read my drafts and provide me with feedback. Remember, these are just two examples. Professors are also more likely to look more favorably on you when it comes time to grade if you sought out their assistance and advocated for yourself throughout the semester.

Finals are right around the corner. Don’t forget that you’re doing great. You’re almost there! Keep working hard, but remember to take breaks. Grades are important, but so are you.