



**BALL STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

Office of Student Success  
Coaching

# BSU STUDENT SUCCESS FINAL EXAMS PREPARATION GUIDE

Finals season can be overwhelming, but you don't have to go through it unprepared.



This packet is designed to help you organize your time, build effective study habits, and take care of yourself along the way.

Use these tools to stay on track, lower stress, and feel more confident heading into your exams.



- ✓ Tools to plan and prioritize your finals
- ✓ Quick, effective study strategies
- ✓ Self-care tips and weekly scheduling support



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# FINALS SURVIVAL TOOLKIT

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For more resources or information about  
Student Success Coaching, contact us!

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# Fall 2025 Final Exam Preparation Packet

## Step 1: Get Your Materials Organized

The first step in preparing for finals is to get organized by writing out a detailed list of all your upcoming exams, papers, and project, so you can see everything you need to tackle and start creating a plan to manage your time effectively.

LIST YOUR CLASSES THAT HAVE FINALS	FORMAT OF THE FINAL EXAM/PROJECT/PAPER/OTHER

## Get Organized: Part 2

The next important step is to understand what each final exam or project requires. In the section below, list the date, time, and location for each of your finals. Check your syllabus, Canvas, or other course resources to find out whether the exam is cumulative, how much it counts toward your final grade, and what topics will be included. Be sure to also note whether the final will be taken in person or online.

Final #2:		Cumulative? YES or NO
Date:	Time:	Location:
Material Covered on Final:		
Format: (Circle those that apply)	Multiple Choice	True/False
Format: (Circle those that apply)	Essay/Short Answer	Problem Solving
Format: (Circle those that apply)	Paper/Project	
Current Class Grade:	Final Counts for What % of Class Grade:	



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<b>Final #2:</b>		Cumulative? YES or NO
Date:	Time:	Location:
Material Covered on Final:		
Format: (Circle those that apply)    Multiple Choice    True/False    Essay/Short Answer    Problem Solving    Paper/Project		
Current Class Grade:	Final Counts for What % of Class Grade:	

<b>Final #3:</b>		Cumulative? YES or NO
Date:	Time:	Location:
Material Covered on Final:		
Format: (Circle those that apply)    Multiple Choice    True/False    Essay/Short Answer    Problem Solving    Paper/Project		
Current Class Grade:	Final Counts for What % of Class Grade:	

<b>Final #4:</b>		Cumulative? YES or NO
Date:	Time:	Location:
Material Covered on Final:		
Format: (Circle those that apply)    Multiple Choice    True/False    Essay/Short Answer    Problem Solving    Paper/Project		
Current Class Grade:	Final Counts for What % of Class Grade:	

<b>Final #5:</b>		Cumulative? YES or NO
Date:	Time:	Location:
Material Covered on Final:		
Format: (Circle those that apply)    Multiple Choice    True/False    Essay/Short Answer    Problem Solving    Paper/Project		
Current Class Grade:	Final Counts for What % of Class Grade:	

<b>Final #6:</b>		Cumulative? YES or NO
Date:	Time:	Location:
Material Covered on Final:		
Format: (Circle those that apply)    Multiple Choice    True/False    Essay/Short Answer    Problem Solving    Paper/Project		
Current Class Grade:	Final Counts for What % of Class Grade:	

<b>Final #7:</b>		Cumulative? YES or NO
Date:	Time:	Location:
Material Covered on Final:		
Format: (Circle those that apply)    Multiple Choice    True/False    Essay/Short Answer    Problem Solving    Paper/Project		
Current Class Grade:	Final Counts for What % of Class Grade:	

## Step 2: Set Priorities Before You Study

**Every final matters**, but not all will demand the same amount of your time or energy. Before diving into your study plan, it helps to figure out which exams or projects deserve the most attention. This doesn't need to be perfect—just a thoughtful way to organize your focus. Here are a few things to help you decide what should come first:

- How challenging is the course or final?
- How much of your final grade does the exam or project count for?
- Where do you currently stand in the class?
- How confident do you feel about the material?

In the section below, rank your finals in order of priority, starting with the one that will take the most time or effort to prepare for. Beside each one, write down the date you plan to begin studying or working on it.

FINALS PRIORITY LIST		DATE TO BEGIN STUDYING
#1		
#2		
#3		
#4		
#5		
#6		
#7		

**TIPS:** \*Students often focus on material they already know, but it's important to give extra attention to the finals you feel least confident about and that will take the most time to prepare for.

\*\*Also, keep in mind the order of your exams—prioritizing earlier finals can be helpful since you'll have more time to prepare for those scheduled later in the week.

## Prioritize: Part 2 - Maintain Self-Care as a Priority

Finals can be a challenging and stressful time, and it's easy to put your well-being on the back burner. But taking care of yourself is just as important as studying—your body and mind need support to function at their best. Here are some simple self-care tips to help you stay balanced, focused, and resilient during finals week:

- Take regular breaks: Use techniques like the Pomodoro method (25 minutes of work, 5-minute break) to stay refreshed and focused.
- Get enough sleep: Aim for 7–9 hours each night. Your brain needs rest to retain information and stay sharp.
- Fuel your body: Eat balanced meals and stay hydrated; try not to rely solely on caffeine and snacks.
- Move your body: Even a short walk or some light stretching can help relieve stress and boost your energy.
- Stay connected: Reach out to friends, family, or study groups for support and encouragement.
- Practice mindfulness: Try deep breathing, meditation, or journaling to manage anxiety and stay grounded.
- Set realistic goals: Break tasks into smaller, manageable chunks and celebrate small wins along the way.
- Be kind to yourself: Finals are tough so **give yourself grace** and recognize that doing your best is enough.

## Step 3: Create a Finals Study Plan

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to building a finals study plan. What works for one student might not work for another. Your schedule, learning style, and personal preferences all play a role. In this section, you'll find a variety of tools and strategies designed to help you craft a study plan that fits your unique needs and gets you moving in the right direction.

### Study Smaller Amounts of Material - Divide and Conquer

Preparing for finals can feel overwhelming if you try to study everything at once. Instead, break the material into smaller sections and spread your review over several days. For example, if your exam covers 10 chapters, study two chapters per day. Each day, learn the new section and quickly review the previous day's material. This approach reinforces your understanding and keeps the workload manageable.

### Study Session Planning

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
DATE:				
TIME:				
LOCATION:				
GOAL:				
STRATEGIES:				

**TIPS:** \*Choose a productive study space. (Bracken Library 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Floor are silent spaces.)      \*\*Set specific goals or use SMART goal format to set goals. (By the end of this study session, I will...)      \*\*\*Use active study strategies that make sense for each class/final

### Start or Join a Study Group

#### Organizing the Group

- Keep it small and focused: 3–5 members. Big enough for diverse input & small enough to stay on track.
- Choose committed members: Invite classmates who are serious about studying, not just hanging out.
- Set clear goals: Decide what you want to cover each session (chapters, practice problems, review sheets).
- Schedule wisely: Pick times that fit around everyone's exam schedule and energy levels.

#### Structuring Study Sessions

- Assign roles: Rotate roles like timekeeper, note taker, or discussion leader.
- Set an agenda: Plan out the session (e.g., 30 min review, 20 min quiz each other, 10 min recap).
- Use active study methods: Quiz each other, explain concepts aloud, or work through them together.
- Break it up: Take 5–10 minute breaks every hour to recharge.

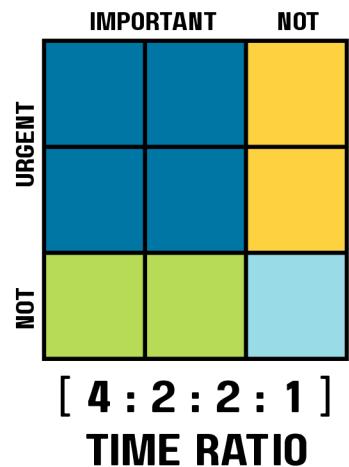
#### Group Dynamics

- Be respectful of time: Start and end when you said you would.
- Encourage participation: Everyone should contribute and ask questions.
- Stay on task: Minimize distractions (phones, side conversations, social media).
- Be supportive: Celebrate small wins and encourage each other when material feels tough.

#### Maximizing Effectiveness

- Share resources: Exchange notes, study guides, and practice exams.
- Teach to learn: Have each person explain a key concept – teaching reinforces understanding.
- Review after each session: Summarize what you covered and decide on goals for next time.
- Keep it flexible: Adjust methods based on what's working (or not).

## "The Time Square"



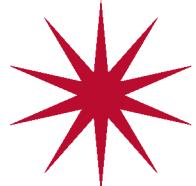
# TIME AND TASK MANAGEMENT

- 1 **IMPORTANT + URGENT**
- 2 **IMPORTANT + NOT URGENT**
- 3 **NOT IMPORTANT + URGENT**
- 4 **NOT IMPORTANT + NOT URGENT**

MOST TIME



LEAST TIME



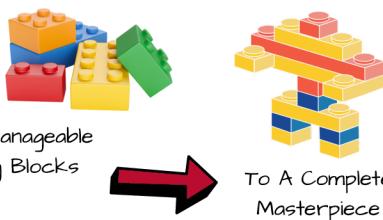
## Rule ONE



## Rule TWO

**LET TASKS LEAD, LET TIME GUIDE.**

**TASKS DECIDE WHAT MATTERS.**  
**TIME MAKES SURE IT HAPPENS.**



From Manageable Building Blocks

To A Complete Masterpiece



### **TASK > TIME**

Tasks set priorities: Start with what needs to be done, not just what fits on the clock.

Time supports tasks: Use time to pace yourself, not to box yourself in.

Flexibility matters: If one task takes longer, shift the "when" instead of derailing your whole day.

Deadlines are the anchor: As long as you finish by your set deadline, the exact hour matters less.

Balance is key: Some things must happen on time (class, meetings), but most tasks just need to be completed.

START WITH BIG GOALS.

BREAK THEM INTO SMALLER TASKS.

BIG GOALS GUIDE YOU.

SMALL TASKS GET YOU THERE.



## Rule three

**FLEXIBILITY AND COMPROMISE ARE KEY!**

**FALLING BEHIND DOESN'T MEAN FAILING; YOU CAN ALWAYS SHIFT STRATEGIES AND FIND SPACE TO CATCH UP.**

**BUILD ROOM FOR SETBACKS TO HAVE FLEXIBILITY WHEN LIFE GETS MESSY**

**SUCCESS ISN'T ABOUT STICKING TO A PERFECT SCHEDULE, IT'S ABOUT ADAPTING TO CHANGE.**

**TAKE A MOMENT TO CELEBRATE AND PROVE THAT YOU CAN ADJUST AND KEEP MOVING.**

**COMPROMISE ISN'T WEAKNESS, IT'S A STRATEGY TO BE SURE YOUR GOALS SURVIVE REAL LIFE.**

## Weekly Schedule (Week Before Finals: December 1 - 5)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
6:30 - 7:30						
7:30 - 8:30						
8:30 - 9:30						
9:30 - 10:30						
10:30 - 11:30						
11:30 - 12:30						
12:30 - 1:30						
1:30 - 2:30						
2:30 - 3:30						
3:30 - 4:30						
4:30 - 5:30						
5:30 - 6:30						
6:30 - 7:30						
7:30 - 8:30						
8:30 - 9:30						
9:30 - 10:30						
10:30 - 11:30						

## Schedule Your Time Throughout the Week

This weekly schedule is here to help you take control of your time as you prepare for finals. Start by plugging in your non-negotiable commitments which would be things like classes, work, or meetings that are already set. After that, make sure to block time for basics like eating, sleeping, and taking care of yourself. Finals can be demanding, so don't forget to include breaks and downtime to rest and reset. Once you've added those essentials, use the remaining space to plan out when you'll study and what you'll focus on. Having a clear plan can lower stress and help you use your time in a way that actually works for you.

## Weekly Schedule (Finals Week: December 8 - 12)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
6:30 - 7:30						
7:30 - 8:30						
8:30 - 9:30						
9:30 - 10:30						
10:30 - 11:30						
11:30 - 12:30						
12:30 - 1:30						
1:30 - 2:30						
2:30 - 3:30						
3:30 - 4:30						
4:30 - 5:30						
5:30 - 6:30						
6:30 - 7:30						
7:30 - 8:30						
8:30 - 9:30						
9:30 - 10:30						
10:30 - 11:30						

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## Create a Finals Due, To-Do, & Events List

If planning your day by the hour isn't your thing, using daily to-do lists might be a better fit. Listing out what you need to accomplish each day before finals can keep you focused, reduce stress, and help you stay on top of your goals. We recommend utilizing the full Due, To-Do, & Events Worksheet on the BSU Student Success Resources page.

When organizing your list, it helps to separate items into three categories: Due (assignments, papers, or exams that have a set deadline), To-Do (tasks you need to complete, like studying or meeting with a tutor), and Events (scheduled commitments such as classes, work shifts, or campus activities). Labeling each item this way can make your list easier to follow and help you prioritize what needs your attention each day.

**DUE - What is due today?**    **TO-DO - What needs to get done today?**    **EVENTS: What do you have going on today?**

SUNDAY	DUE:	TO-DO:	EVENTS:
SATURDAY			
FRIDAY			
THURSDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
TUESDAY			
MONDAY			

# Study Schedule Planner

Creating a clear and realistic study schedule is one of the best ways to stay organized and manage your time effectively. This worksheet will help you plan your study sessions around your classes, assignments, and personal commitments so you can prepare confidently and avoid last-minute cramming. Use it to set goals, track your progress, and build consistent study habits that work for you.

<b>Study Goal:</b>	Write down the class and format of the exam.
<b>What class is this for?</b>	History 150 - Chapters 1-5 Multiple choice with 3 short answer
<b>1</b> <b>GET FOCUSED</b>	<p>Identify your strengths with this material and topics that need more attention.</p> <p>I feel confident about the material in Chapters 1 and 2—especially the key ideas around the Renaissance and Reformation. Chapters 3-5 need more work. Need to review the impact of colonialism and how global trade networks shifted during this period. Next session: timelines, major turning points, and reviewing key terms</p>
<b>2</b> <b>GET OPTIONS</b>	<p>Identify the strategy you will use for practicing and engaging with the material.</p> <p>I'll make a timeline for Chapters 3-5 and focus on cause-and-effect. I'll use flashcards for key terms, quiz myself on Enlightenment ideas, and try explaining the Atlantic revolutions aloud. If needed, I'll visit the Learning Center for extra help.</p>
<b>3</b> <b>GET REAL</b>	<p>Decide how often and long you will study. Consider a power hour or 5 Day Study Plan.</p> <p>I'll study for 45 minutes each evening from 6:30-7:15 p.m. leading up to the test. I'll focus on one chapter per day and leave the last day for review and practice questions.</p>
<b>4</b> <b>GET DEADLINES</b>	<p>Confirm when the exam is and lay out when you will study.</p> <p>The test is next Monday, so I'll finish all chapter reviews by Friday. I'll do a full review and practice quiz over the weekend and make sure my notes and flashcards are ready by Thursday night.</p>
<b>ADDITIONAL NOTES:</b>	<p>What else could you do to practice or study for this exam?</p> <p>If I get stuck on any big concepts, I'll email my prof or ask in class on Thursday. I'll also review the Canvas slides for Chapters 4 and 5—they helped last time. Don't forget to bring flashcards to the library on Friday for group review with Maya.</p>

# Study Schedule Planner

Use the chart below to create your own Study Schedule Planner

## Study Goal:

Write down the class and format of the exam.

## What class is this for?

**1**

Identify your strengths with this material and topics that need more attention.

**GET FOCUSED**

**2**

Identify the strategy you will use for practicing and engaging with the material.

**GET OPTIONS**

**3**

Decide how often and long you will study. Consider a power hour or 5 Day Study Plan.

**GET REAL**

**4**

Confirm when the exam is and lay out when you will study.

**GET DEADLINES**

## ADDITIONAL NOTES:

What else could you do to practice or study for this exam?

## RESOURCES TO USE:

Learning Center - NQ 350  
Writing Center - RB 295

Bracken Library Quiet Floors - 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>  
Student Success Coaching - NQ 339

## “Power Hour” Study Session

A Power Hour study session is all about getting the most out of your time by working with intention and focus!

This isn't just another study block, it's a high-energy-no-distraction hour where you commit to tackling your most important or challenging tasks. Whether you're reviewing for a big exam, organizing notes, or starting a major assignment, the Power Hour helps you make real progress.

Use this worksheet to set clear goals, choose your strategies, and stay accountable from start to finish. Let's make this hour count!

1. **Goal Setting (1-2 minutes):** Choose one clear, realistic goal for your session. Example: “Finish outlining my psychology essay” or “Review chapters 3 and 4 for my biology quiz.”
2. **Study with a Focus (30-50 minutes):** Work without distractions. This means turn off notifications, find a quiet spot, and dive in. Example: Use active recall, rework practice problems, or organize your notes into flashcards.
3. **Reward Yourself (5-10 minutes):** Take a short break and do something that feels good. Example: Grab a snack, scroll TikTok, take a short walk, or text a friend. Set a timer to avoid overindulgence.
4. **Review (5-10 minutes):** Reflect on what you accomplished and what's next. Example: Check off your goal, jot down a quick note like “Need to review flashcards again tomorrow,” or plan your next Power Hour.

### Create your Own “Power Hour”

#### GOAL SETTING (1-2 minutes)

What specific task do I want to complete or make progress on during this session?  
Why is this task important right now (deadline, difficulty, impact on my grade, etc)?

#### STUDY WITH A FOCUS (30-50 minutes)

What study strategy or tool will I use to stay focused? (e.g., flashcards, outlining, practice problems)  
What distractions might come up, and how will I minimize them?

#### REWARD YOURSELF (5-10 minutes)

What's a small reward I can give myself after completing this session?  
How will I use this break to rest or recharge before the next thing?

#### REVIEW (5-10 minutes)

What did I accomplish during this Power Hour?  
What are my next steps or follow-up tasks to keep the momentum going?

What did you learn about your focus, energy, or habits during this Power Hour that you can use in future study sessions?

# PROJECT ORGANIZER

PROJECT NAME:	DATE:
<b>PROJECT GOALS AND PRIORITIES:</b>	
<b>KEY DATES/TIMELINE:</b>	<b>ACTION PLAN:</b>
	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
<b>OTHER NOTES:</b>	

# Step 4: Mindset Matters: Get Your Head in the Game

Before you hit the books, take a minute to train your brain toward positive momentum and success. Finals aren't just about what you know, they're about how you think and feel while you study. When your mind is calm and your motivation is activated, your brain actually learns and remembers more easily. Use this page to reset your mindset, boost your focus, and quiet the stress so you can study smarter (and feel better doing it).

## Notice Your Current Mindset

Awareness is the first step toward change. When you pause and name how you're feeling, you activate the part of your brain that helps regulate emotion and motivation.

Quick Check-In: Circle all that apply to how you are feeling about finals week.

**overwhelmed    motivated    tired    focused    hopeful**  
**avoidant    prepared    procrastinating**

\*\*Add any other words that describe how you are feeling about finals week.

## Shift From Survival Mode to Growth Mode

When your brain perceives finals as a threat, it triggers fight-or-flight. Reframe exams as a challenge (not a danger) to activate your prefrontal cortex which is the decision-making part of your brain that boosts focus and confidence.

Try to reframe common statements about Final Exams:

**Instead of: "I have to pass."**

**Try: "I get to show what I've learned."**

**Instead of: "I'm terrible at this."**

**Try: "I'm still learning how to get better at this."**

Your turn: Rewrite one of your own negative or stressful thoughts into a growth-oriented one.

**Negative or Stressful Thought:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reframing of That Thought:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Plan a Positive Start

Athletes use visualization to mentally rehearse success and you can too as a way to set yourself up for success. Imagining yourself succeeding primes your brain to feel confident and prepared when it's time to perform. The way you begin a study session sets the tone for everything that follows. A simple ritual or routine tells your brain, "It's time to focus," and helps you shift from distraction to intention.

## Create a Finals Mantra

A mantra is a short phrase that grounds you in the moment and reminds you of your strength. It can calm your nerves, refocus your attention, and replace self-doubt with self-belief.

### Examples:

**"I've handled harder weeks than this."**    **"One task at a time."**    **"Progress, not perfection."**

Write your mantra here: \_\_\_\_\_

## Visualize Success

A mantra is a short phrase that grounds you in the moment and reminds you of your strength. It can calm your nerves, refocus your attention, and replace self-doubt with self-belief.

Describe one detail from your visualization, like what you saw, heard, or felt while imagining your success.

# Step 5: Study Strategies: Work Smarter, Remember Longer

When it comes to studying, **how you study matters more than how long you study**. These strategies help your brain encode information more efficiently, make learning stick, and keep motivation high all the way through finals week.

## SQ3R Method: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review

**Why it works:** Your brain remembers what it understands, not what it skims. SQ3R turns passive reading into active learning by making you engage with the text before, during, and after reading.

### How to do it:

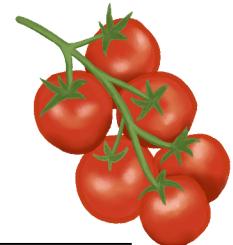
- Survey: Skim headings, bold terms, and summaries first.
- Question: Turn section titles into questions (“What is cognitive dissonance?”).
- Read: Read with your questions in mind.
- Recite: Pause and summarize out loud or in notes without looking at your notes!
- Review: Revisit key points at the end to lock them in.



**Try it:** Pick one section of reading that will help prepare you for one of your final exams and use the SQ3R method to see how much more you retain.

## Pomodoro Technique

**Why it works:** Your focus naturally dips after about 25 minutes. Pomodoro uses short bursts and breaks to prevent burnout and build consistency.



### How to do it:

- Study for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break.
- After four rounds, take a longer break (15–30 minutes).
- Use a timer or app (like Forest or Focus Keeper) to stay on track.

**Try it:** Write one task you could finish in a single Pomodoro session: \_\_\_\_\_

## Self-Testing

**Why it works:** Testing yourself helps your brain retrieve information – the key to long-term memory. It’s like doing a mental workout instead of just watching a lecture.

### How to do it:

- Cover your notes and answer practice questions.
- Use flashcards, practice quizzes, or write your own test.
- Check answers and focus on what you missed.



**Tip:** Retrieval feels harder than rereading, but that’s exactly why it works.

## Teach the Material

**Why it works:** Explaining something in your own words forces your brain to organize information and fill in any gaps in understanding.



### How to do it:

- Teach a friend, your pet, or even your mirror.
- Pretend you’re giving a mini lecture or writing a how-to guide.
- Focus on clarity – could someone new understand your explanation?

**Try it:** Pick one concept you’ll “teach” out loud, to a friend, tonight: \_\_\_\_\_

## Use Study Aids

**Why it works:** Tools like flashcards, apps, and visuals like concept maps make learning more interactive and help with repetition which is how your brain moves info into long-term memory.

### How to do it:

- Use digital flashcards (like Quizlet or Brainscape) for quick reviews.
- Make your own physical cards to write, shuffle, and test yourself.
- Add visuals, examples, or color in your notes to make memory cues stronger.



**Try it:** Make 5 flashcards right now for a topic that stresses you out. Future you will thank you later.

# Create Your Own Study Guide

If your professor doesn't give you a study guide before a big exam — make your own!

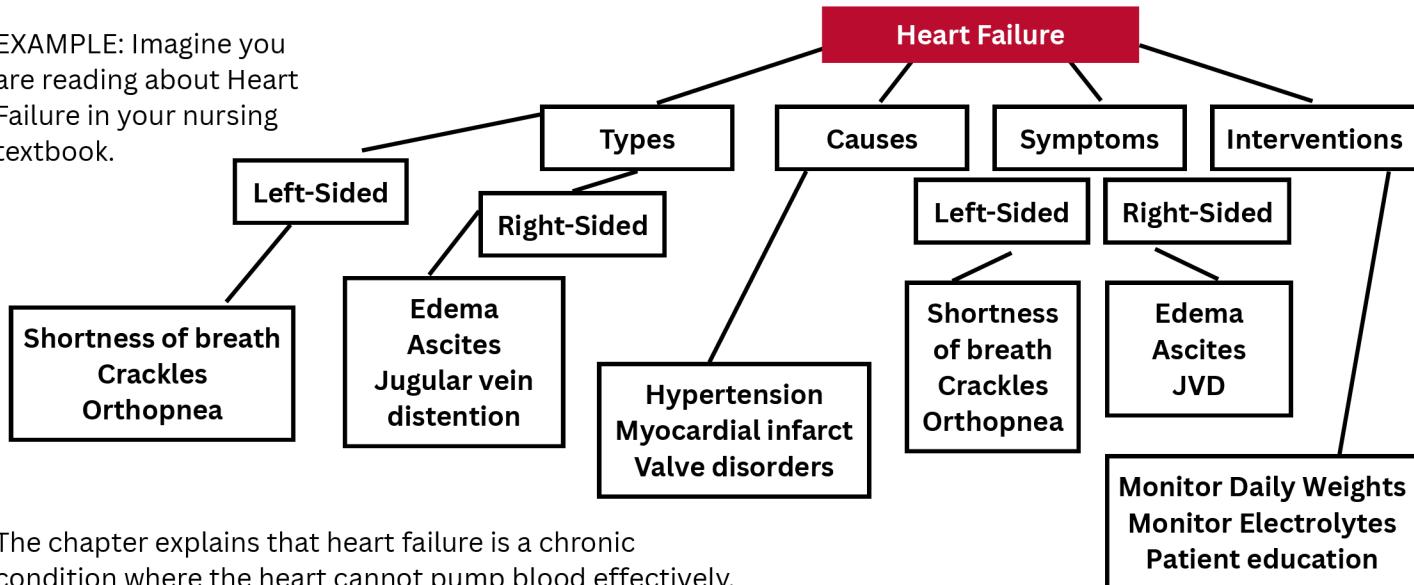
Creating a study guide is one of the best ways to organize lecture notes and textbook material. A good guide not only helps you manage large amounts of information but also strengthens your memory and deepens your understanding of the subject.

## 4 Ways to Make Your Own Study Guide

### 1. Concept Map

This tool organizes information that isn't sequential or chronological. Concepts move from general to specific, with details, examples, and real-life applications added along the way.

EXAMPLE: Imagine you are reading about Heart Failure in your nursing textbook.



The chapter explains that heart failure is a chronic condition where the heart cannot pump blood effectively, and it distinguishes between left-sided and right-sided failure. It notes that common causes include hypertension, myocardial infarction, and valve disorders.

The text goes on to describe the symptoms: left-sided failure often leads to shortness of breath, crackles, and orthopnea, while right-sided failure is more likely to cause edema, ascites, and jugular vein distention. Finally, the chapter outlines nursing interventions, such as monitoring daily weights, restricting sodium and fluids, giving diuretics, and educating patients about lifestyle changes.

### 2. Comparison Chart

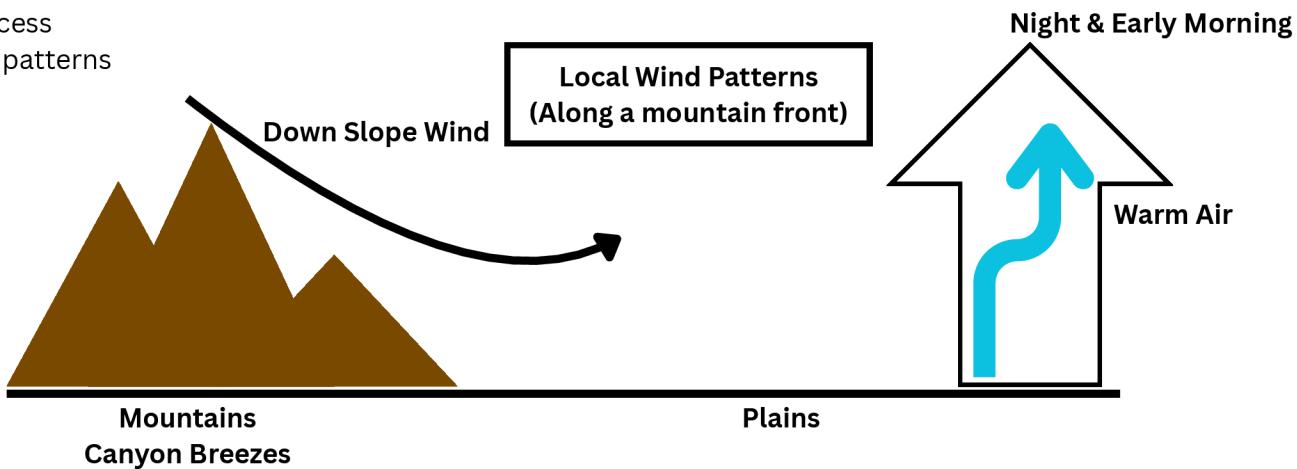
A comparison chart helps to organize information into categories and to explain relationships between categories or characteristics. With this tool, it is easier to see the differences and similarities between facts, theories, theorists, processes, etc.

Memory Type	Information Stored	Capacity	Duration of Info	Format
Sensory	Temporary; senses	High	< 1 second (vision); few seconds (hearing)	Literal
Short-term	Brief; info. Currently being used	Limited	< 20 seconds	Auditory and verbal
Long-term	Relatively permanent	Unlimited	Long or Permanent	Semantic

### 3. Process Diagram:

A process diagram is a tool that visually shows the steps, stages, or methods involved in how something happens. For instance, a geology class might use one to explain how rock layers form, while a nutrition class could illustrate the stages of digestion. In political science, a process diagram can map out how a bill becomes a law, and in human development, it can outline the stages of child growth. By breaking down complex information into clear visuals, process diagrams make it easier to understand and remember key concepts.

EXAMPLE: A process diagram of wind patterns (geography)



### 4. Informal Outline:

An informal outline is a study tool that helps organize information by showing how ideas connect to the main topic and by ranking details according to importance. It is also one of the most common formats students use when taking notes.

#### Three Major Psychological Approaches to Personality

1. Dynamic (also called psychoanalytic)
  - a. Characteristics
    - i. Person continually in conflict; opposing forces
    - ii. Source of forces = psychic apparatus
2. Psychic Apparatus
  - a. ID: Instinctual drives possessed at birth such as hunger, thirst, sex, and aggression most important drives (per Freud)
  - b. EGO: Reconciles demands of id with "real" world moderates and guides basic instincts in line with society's norms; provides capacity for delayed gratification
  - c. SUPER EGO: Conscience ("internalized parent") shaped by social forces such as school, church, and close acquaintances
3. Humanistic
4. Social Learning

Using tools like process diagrams and informal outlines can make studying more effective by helping you organize complex information and see how ideas relate to each other. By visualizing steps, stages, or priorities, you can better understand and remember key concepts, whether you are learning science, politics, or human development.

Practicing these strategies regularly can make your study sessions more focused and help you retain information more confidently.

# Step 6: Finals Self-Care & Stress Management

You can't pour from an empty cup. **During finals week, taking care of yourself is taking care of your grades.** Use these tools to protect your energy, stay sharp, and finish strong.

## Prioritize Sleep

### Quick Sleep Audit:

Habit	Yes	No
I get 7-9 hours of sleep most nights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I go to bed / wake up around the same time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I stop scrolling or studying 30 min before bed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My sleep space is dark, cool, and quiet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Pro tip: Each ✓ adds up! Even improving one area boosts your next-day focus and memory retention.**

What's one small bedtime change you'll try this week? \_\_\_\_\_

## Eat and Hydrate for Energy

Your brain runs on what you feed it. Balanced meals and steady hydration keep your focus sharp, your mood stable, and your energy consistent through long study days. Food isn't a distraction from studying, it's part of it.

The table below offers nutritious options that will support your studying for every time of the day:

WHEN	“SMART” OPTION	WHY IT HELPS
BREAKFAST	greek yogurt & fruit, breakfast burrito, oatmeal	Jump-starts metabolism & concentration
LUNCH	salad with protein, grain bowl, sandwich & fruit	Balances blood sugar for steady focus
STUDY SNACK	nuts, granola bars, apple slices, string cheese	Keeps energy stable between study blocks
HYDRATION	water, tea, 100 % juice (beware of sugar content), electrolyte packets	Dehydration = brain fog

**Challenge:** Swap one sugary snack or energy drink for a balanced choice today! Your brain will thank you later.

## Move Your Body, Move Your Mind

Physical movement resets your brain chemistry and boosts motivation. Even a few minutes of walking, stretching, or dancing between study sessions can refresh your focus and relieve stress fast.

**Movement Menu:** pick two of the following options to work into your study breaks, today!

- Walk one lap around campus
- Stretch for 5 minutes between study blocks
- Visit Rec Center for a class or workout
- Dance break (one full song minimum)
- 10 jumping jacks between flashcards
- Yoga or guided stretch video

### Bonus Brain Fact:



Short bursts of movement increase oxygen and glucose flow to your prefrontal cortex – the part that handles focus and planning.

**Add a Pomodoro twist: Study for 25 minutes, then move for 5 – your brain will stay refreshed and focused**

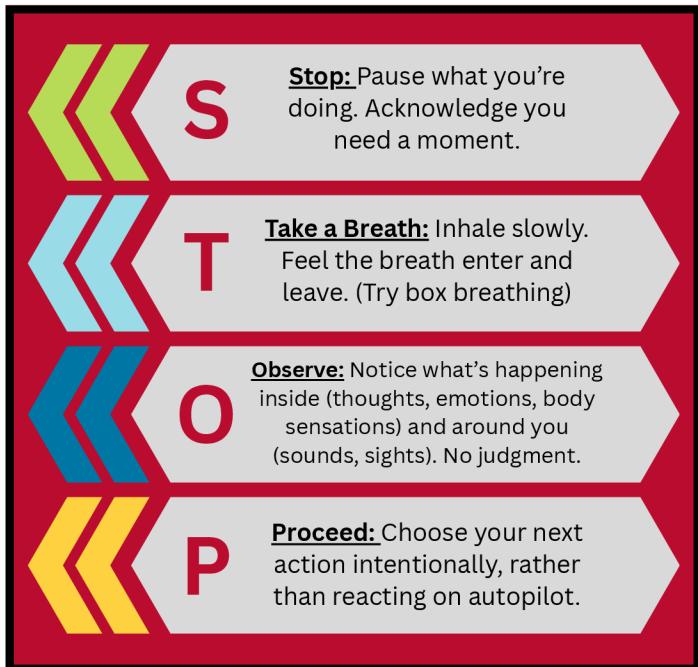
## Finals Self-Care & Stress Management cont.

## Mindfulness Minute

When finals pressure builds, mindfulness helps you pause and reset. A few deep breaths or a short journal session can calm your nerves, clear your mind, and bring your attention back to the present moment.

The **STOP tool** helps you pause before stress takes over. It's a quick mindfulness method that creates space between a trigger and your reaction, helping you make calmer, more intentional choices in the moment.

**You get to respond to the moment instead of react.**



## Try Box Breathing:

A quick way to calm your mind and body:

- Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 4, and hold again for 4.
- Repeat a few cycles, then notice how you feel.



## Mind Full? Write it Out

Take 3 minutes to journal your thoughts to release mental clutter before you study.

## Check In. Don't Check Out

You don't have to get through finals alone. Staying connected to friends, study partners, or campus resources keeps stress in check and reminds you that support is part of success.

Draw or list three people or resources that help you recharge.

Examples: friend, roommate, study group, Student Success Coach, Counseling Center, faculty mentor, family member.

# Understanding Test Anxiety

## WHAT IS TEST ANXIETY AND WHY CAN IT OCCUR?

- Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety that causes excessive stress before or during exams, which can interfere with a student's ability to recall information and think clearly (Cassady & Johnson, 2002).
- It often develops from a combination of fear of failure, lack of preparation, or a history of poor testing experiences.
- Negative thoughts, high expectations, or pressure to perform well can trigger anxiety, even when a student knows the material.

## HOW DO STRESS AND TEST ANXIETY RELATE TO EACH OTHER?

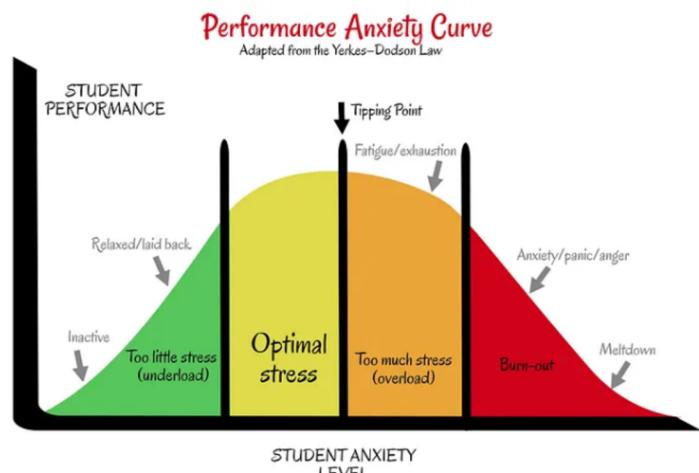
- Test anxiety is a specific form of academic stress, and both can activate the body's stress response shown by raising heart rate, tensing muscles, and impairing memory (Misra & McKean, 2000).
- High stress levels can intensify test anxiety, making it harder to focus or stay calm during an exam.
- Long-term academic stress can create a cycle where students begin to fear tests more over time, increasing avoidance or procrastination.

## PERFORMANCE ANXIETY CURVE

This graph shows the performance anxiety curve, which illustrates how stress can impact your ability to perform. A moderate level of stress, known as optimal stress, can improve focus, energy, and motivation, helping you stay alert and productive. This is often referred to as eustress, or optimal stress.

However, when stress levels become too high or last too long, it can lead to distress, where anxiety, confusion, and fatigue start to interfere with performance. If this continues without relief or support, it can result in burnout, where motivation drops and exhaustion takes over.

Understanding this curve can help you recognize when stress is helping you and when it may be time to slow down or reach out for support.



## WHAT SYMPTOMS CAN OCCUR DUE TO TEST ANXIETY?

- Physical symptoms like headaches, nausea, rapid heartbeat, or sweating can show up before or during a test.
- Cognitive symptoms include racing thoughts, trouble concentrating, or blanking out on material you studied.
- Emotional symptoms may involve feelings of fear, helplessness, or frustration.
- Behavioral symptoms can include avoiding tests, procrastinating, or giving up during the exam.

## HOW DO I OVERCOME TEST ANXIETY?

- Prepare early and regularly by using study tools like planners, review guides, and practice tests to build confidence and reduce last-minute stress.
- Use calming techniques such as deep breathing, positive self-talk, or grounding exercises before and during the exam.
- Challenge negative thoughts by reminding yourself of past successes and focusing on effort, not perfection.
- Build academic buoyancy, or the ability to bounce back from everyday academic setbacks like bad grades, tough assignments, or high-pressure exams.

Understanding and building academic buoyancy can help you stay steady when challenges show up. Turn to the next page to explore how this concept can support your long-term academic success.

## WHAT ARE THE 5 C'S OF ACADEMIC BUOYANCY? (Martin & Marsh 2008)

<b>Composure</b> (Low Anxiety)	<b>Confidence</b> (self efficacy)	<b>Commitment</b> (persistence)	<b>Control</b> (low uncertain control)	<b>Coordination</b> (planning)
The ability to stay calm and steady under pressure, especially during tests or stressful deadlines.	The ability to believe in your capacity to learn, grow, and succeed—even when challenges arise.	The ability to stay focused on your academic goals and follow through, even when motivation is low.	The ability to recognize what you can influence—like your effort, attitude, and response to setbacks.	The ability to manage your time, tasks, and study habits in an organized and effective way.

## TIPS TO REDUCE TEST ANXIETY AND ACHIEVE ACADEMIC BUOYANCY:

### **Before the Exam:**

- Create a realistic study plan that breaks down material over several days.
- Practice with sample questions or past exams to build familiarity and reduce fear.
- Use positive self-talk like “I’ve prepared for this” or “I can handle this challenge.”
- Visualize success by imagining yourself calmly working through the test.
- Get good sleep and fuel your body with food and water—not just caffeine.
- Pack your materials (ID, pens, calculator, etc.) the night before to reduce day-of stress.

### **During the Exam:**

- Take a few deep breaths before starting to center yourself.
- Read instructions carefully and scan the entire test to plan your time.
- Tackle easier questions first to build confidence and momentum.
- Use calming strategies if anxiety rises (pause, breathe, stretch your hands).
- Avoid comparing yourself to others—focus on your own process.
- Remind yourself: “I’m doing my best, and that is enough right now.”

### **After the Exam:**

- Take time to decompress, regardless of how you feel it went.
- Avoid obsessing over mistakes—acknowledge effort over outcome.
- Reflect on what worked and what didn’t to improve your next study plan.
- Celebrate your resilience, not just your grade.
- If things didn’t go well, talk to your professor or an academic coach for feedback.
- Use the experience as a learning tool—not a definition of your ability.

### **1. Which strategy from this worksheet do you want to try during your next exam, and why?**

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### **2. How can you build your academic buoyancy this semester when challenges come up?**

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# Finals Week Survival Guide

## Bring it all together.

Use this page to plan a balanced, brain-friendly finals week that includes study strategies, self-care, and motivation. Each section represents a key area from this toolkit: fill it out to create your personal finals survival strategy.

MINDSET	STUDY STRATEGY
<p>My Finals Mantra: _____</p> <p>One thought I'll reframe: _____</p> <p>When I feel stressed, I'll remind myself: _____</p>	<p>Top 3 Classes to Focus On:</p> <p>1 _____</p> <p>2 _____</p> <p>3 _____</p>  <p>Study Techniques I'll Use: (Circle them below)</p> <p>Pomodoro SQ3R Flashcards Teach-Back Concept Map</p> <p>Best Times I Focus: _____</p>
SELF-CARE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT	MOTIVATION AND REWARDS
<p>My sleep goal (per night): _____ hours.</p> <p>My movement goal (per day): _____</p> <p>Activities I will do: _____</p> <p>Hydration (oz per day): _____</p> <p>Mindfulness Tool I will use: (circle)</p> <p>STOP Box Breathing Journaling Walk Outside</p> <p>My support circle: (list people and campus resources you will call on when you need)</p> 	<p>My Finals Goals: _____</p> <p>Small Reward for each goal:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What is your End-of-Finals Celebration?</p> 
EMOTIONS CHECK-IN	
<p>Describe or draw how you are feeling before finals week:</p>	<p>Midweek I will take time to focus on how I am feeling by....</p>

## Choosing a Study Group:

The right study group can boost motivation and help you see material from new angles. Choose people who stay focused, contribute equally, and keep each other accountable and not distracted.

MY STUDY GROUP	
GROUP MEMBERS	
MEETING DAY/TIME	
MEETING LOCATION	
PERSONAL GOALS	
GROUP GOALS	
COMMUNICATION METHOD	
1ST MEETING AGENDA	

## Finals Resources:

Ball State offers plenty of ways to help you power through finals week. These include extended hours, special dining meals, free study tools, and wellness support. Use these campus resources to stay fueled, focused, and on track.

### Bracken Library

Open late with extended finals week hours so you can study safely on campus. Check [bsu.edu/libraryhours](http://bsu.edu/libraryhours) for details. Look for stress-free zones, free coffee nights, and even therapy dogs to help you unwind.

### Counseling Center & AARC

Visit the Counseling Center in Lucina Hall for stress management and mindfulness workshops, or stop by the Academic Anxiety Resource Center (AARC) on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Teacher's College for tools to manage test anxiety and study stress.

## Final Thought:

Finals are tough, but you are tougher. Use these resources, make a plan that works for you, and take care of yourself along the way. **You've got everything you need to finish strong—one step at a time.**

For extra support during Finals prep or Finals week, sign into Navigate or scan the QR code here to schedule a coaching session with any of Ball State's Student Success Coaches. For more information visit [bsu.edu/successcoach](http://bsu.edu/successcoach).

Portions of this document was adapted from student success materials from the following academic success centers:  
Purdue University, Northwestern University, and Clemson University.

## Preparing your Study Space:

Your environment shapes your focus. Set up a space that feels calm, organized, and free from distractions. Gather everything you need before you start so your brain can stay in study mode.

ENVIRONMENT	ON CAMPUS	HOME OR ROOM
SOUND & DISTRACTIONS		
ACTIVITY AROUND YOU		
LIGHTING & VISIBILITY		
COMFORT & SEATING		
WORK SURFACE & LAYOUT		
TOOLS & RESOURCES		



### TIP

Treat studying like training or practice. Your environment and your team matter. Pick people who keep you on track, and set up a space that tells your brain, "It's go time."



## University Dining

Keep your energy up with balanced meals and snacks. Most dining locations adjust hours during finals: [bsu.edu/dininghours](http://bsu.edu/dininghours). Watch for special events like Late-Night Breakfast

## The Learning Center

Need a last-minute boost? The Learning Center (NQ 350) offers free tutoring, study sessions, and finals prep across subjects. Use their GPA calculator, study tools, and time-management resources at [bsu.edu/learningcenter](http://bsu.edu/learningcenter)

