How to “P.A.S.S.”

P = Preparation
A = Assess sources of anxiety
S = Stress Management
S = Strategies for test taking

Preparation

Course:	
Date of the Exam:	
What: (exam content. chapters being covered, important concepts)	
When: (Indicate days and time available in your schedule)	
Where: (study space is a strategy)	
With Who:	

Prioritize Information

When preparing for a test, not all information is equally important—prioritizing what to study can save you time and reduce overwhelm. Focus first on material your professor emphasized in class, topics listed on study guides, and anything you struggled with during homework or quizzes. List all the material you need to study in the box below. Be specific and thorough.

Adapted from Purdue University H.B.W. Academic Success Center

Now that you have a thorough list of what content needs to be covered. Try organizing content into three categories: high-confidence (green), medium-confidence (yellow), and low-confidence (red) areas.

This method helps you identify where you need the most review and allows you to spend more time strengthening your weak spots while still refreshing what you already know. Studying smarter, not harder, starts with knowing where to focus.

LOW CONFIDENCE	MEDIUM CONFIDENCE	HIGH CONFIDENCE

After you categorize the specific exam material by color based on how confident you feel: red for low confidence, yellow for moderate confidence, and green for high confidence, organize your study into a 5-day plan. On Day 1, focus on preparing and studying the material in your red category. On Day 2, begin studying new material and set aside time to review what you studied on Day 1.

As you move through the week, continue this pattern: schedule red material first, then yellow, and finally green. Always make time to review content from the previous days. Spacing out your review and returning to topics over time will strengthen your memory and improve recall during the exam.

Date:	**Day 1**	**Day 2**	**Day 3**	**Day 4**	**Day 5**
	Prep and study material (2 Hours)	**Prep and study new material** (2 Hours) **Review material from Day 1.** (30 min)	**Prep and study new material** (1.5 Hours) **Review material from Day 1** (15 mins) **and Day 2** (30 mins)	**Prep and study new material** (1 Hour) **Review material from Day 1** (15 mins), **2** (15 mins), **and 3** (30 mins)	**Focus on the most challenging material from prior days** (1 Hour) **Recreate the testing environment and take a practice test**
	Focused Material: **Study Strategies:**	**Focused Material:** **Study Strategies:**	**Focused Material:** **Study Strategies:**	**Focused Material:** **Study Strategies:**	**Focused Material:** **Study Strategies:**

Anxiety, Stress Management, and Motivation

Test anxiety is a common experience among college students and is often caused by a fear of failure, lack of preparation, or negative past experiences; it can interfere with concentration, memory, and overall performance during exams (Zeidner, 1998).

Well Before	Immediately Before	During
• Study regularly in short, focused sessions. • Use active recall and practice tests to build confidence. • Get enough sleep and maintain healthy habits (food, water, movement). • Talk to instructors or tutors if you're unsure about the material.	• Avoid last-minute cramming and trust your preparation. • Use positive self-talk like "I've prepared and I can do this." • Practice calming techniques like deep breathing or grounding. • Arrive early with needed materials	• Read all directions and scan the test before starting. • If you feel anxious, pause briefly and refocus. • Begin with questions you feel most confident about. • Continue breathing and take a break to close your eyes and count to ten if needed to ground.

5 Ways to Ease Your Testing Anxiety

1. Prepare with Purpose - Effective studying reduces anxiety—use study guides, practice tests, and spaced review to build confidence and feel more in control.
2. Shift Your Self-Talk - Replace negative thoughts like "I'm going to fail" with encouraging ones like "I've done the work and I can handle this."
3. Use Stress as a Signal, Not a Stop Sign - A little stress can sharpen focus. Learn to recognize when it's motivating you versus when it's overwhelming you.
4. Set Meaningful Goals - Connect your exam to a bigger purpose—like passing a course, earning a degree, or reaching a personal goal—to stay motivated through discomfort.
5. Take Care of Your Brain and Body - Sleep, nutrition, movement, and breaks are not extras—they are essential tools for keeping anxiety in check and motivation strong.

Strategies for Test Taking

Preview the test	Skim through the entire test first to get a sense of the questions and plan your time.
Read the directions carefully	Slow down and read all instructions closely to avoid simple mistakes or missing key details.
Do a brain dump	At the beginning, write down important formulas, terms, or concepts while they're fresh in your mind.
Attempt every question	Answer every question, even if unsure—eliminate wrong choices and make your best educated guess.

Multiple Choice	True/False	Matching
• Read all answer choices before selecting. • Eliminate clearly wrong answers. • Watch for tricky wording like "except" or "not." • Trust your first instinct if you studied.	• Be sure the entire statement is true/false • Watch for extreme words like "always" or "never." • A single wrong detail makes the statement false. • Don't overthink simple facts.	• Match items you're sure of first. • Cross off used answers to stay organized. • Look for word clues or patterns. • Double-check for extra or repeated options.