

MATH FINAL EXAM PREPARATION STRATEGIES

PREPARE USING PREVIOUS FINAL EXAMS.

Using final exams from previous semesters is the most efficient way to review specific problem types and assess your own readiness for the exam. As you do this, keep track of the following as your measures of readiness:

1. **Identify the problem types that you KNOW WELL.** Review these but focus on reviewing material with which you are less familiar. Possible examples: solving quadratic equations, finding the equation of a line, completing the square, finding the center and radius of a circle.
2. **Identify the problem types you have NOT QUITE MASTERED.** Review these until you know them well and are confident in your ability to work them. Possible examples: adding or subtracting rational expressions, solving logarithmic equations, rationalizing a binomial denominator, identifying the vertex of a parabola, work-rate problems.
3. **Identify the problem types you struggle with or DO NOT KNOW** Review these, get help to understand them and work to master them. Possible examples: work-rate problems, mixture problems, variation, using properties of exponents with rational exponents). It is important that you identify the kinds of problems you struggle with or do not know how to work.



Use one of the previous (“old”) final exams that your instructor makes available online and work the exam like it was the actual final, without any study aids, no interruptions, and no time breaks in the same amount of time allowed for the final. This will be the best practice and assessment of your readiness for the final.

Your goal is to move problems in the third category (DO NOT KNOW) to the second category (familiar but NOT QUITE MASTERED) and problems in the second category into the first category (KNOW WELL or mastery). Realistically, you may not master all problem types. In this case, learn to recognize the problems you are least confident in working and master as many as you can.

Take advantage of the reviews given by instructors and/or instructor office hours provided prior to the final. When it comes time for the final, you will want to know and recognize the problems that you have mastered and those you do not feel confident in doing.

If you have a STUDY GROUP, this is a great way to discuss and reinforce your understanding of the concepts and techniques from class. It also can help keep you focused on preparing for your exam instead of doing something else.

You need to **devote time** to studying and preparing for the final exam. Plan this into your schedule as it will not “just happen”. Spend the most time on material you do not know well. This can be frustrating, so expect it and accept that it is part of the learning process. Group study helps with this. Allow yourself short breaks, but do not put off your preparation. Before you can “enjoy” studying math, you may need to become successful in “doing” math.

STRATEGIES FOR TAKING THE FINAL

1. **Get good sleep** the two nights prior to the day of the final.
2. **Get up early the day before the final** as preparation for getting up the next day if this is not your typical routine.
3. **Know where and when your final exam is going to be given.** Professors do not excuse coming late or missing the final exam. Final exam times are listed in your class syllabus and are also available on the USU web site in several places. Professors do not provide make ups for a final exam.



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4. **Show your work.** Even though your work may not be graded, work as though it is because attention to detail is critical to successfully completing a math problem. Work in detail until you have completed the problem. Only then should you refer to the answer choices.
5. **Check your answer if possible.** When solving an equation or factoring, it is important to check for accuracy. Do this whenever possible. Some problems **require** that you check your answer like solving a rational equation, solving a radical equation, or solving a logarithmic equation.
6. **Write down formulas you need immediately** at the top of the exam. Do this while your mind is fresh, and you remember them.
7. **Work the problems first that you know well.** This allows you to give attention to the problems you are most confident with while your mind is the most clear. Save for last the problems you struggle with most.
8. **Follow directions carefully.** Look for specific details such as *“Which of the following is a...”* as opposed to *“Which of the following is not a...”*. Emphasis may not be added to the actual directions. Know the difference between being asked to **“solve” an equation** versus being asked to **“simplify” an expression**.
9. If it helps, **stand up or stretch** if you feel tired or you are getting stressed. Just do not disturb others near you.
10. **Mark your scantron sheet and your exam copy.** This will help your professor to trace your results if a scantron sheet is lost or is not read during the scanning process.

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