

Preparing Your Study Guide

First you have to gather together all the sources you'll need. Then, from each source pull out the most important information you need to know for the test. These sources include:

Notes: If you have class notes, they can be a valuable asset. Don't just put everything from your notes onto the study guide, though. Go through and highlight or mark everything in your notes that you think is especially important. Focus on big ideas and main concepts, things you still don't understand, and key words you'll have to be able to define. The same goes for any in-class handouts you've received.

Textbook: If you have a textbook, go through the sections you had to read for class and do the same thing you did with the class notes. Look at chapter and section headings to determine what the main ideas are from the readings—those are things you'll want in your study guide. Also pay attention to bold or italicized key words, and to end-of-chapter questions and/or summaries.

Homework assignments: These can help you figure out what your teacher feels is most important. If it's on the homework, chances are it will be on the test. Pay special attention to anything you got wrong—that's information you'll definitely want to include in your study guide.

Previous tests: Past tests are helpful in two ways. If you're going to be tested on the same information again, a past test will let you know what you still need to study. But even if the next test has nothing to do with the old one, the old test shows you the kinds of questions your teacher asks and the kinds of information he or she focuses on.

Organizing Your Study Guide

Now that you have all the information you'll need together in one place, and you've identified which facts and terms are most important, you just need to pull it all together into one study guide. You can do this by hand, though it's easier on a computer since you can rearrange and reorganize as you go along.

Your study guide can take many forms, but the simplest and easiest is to make a list. List key concept and terms, then below those write the important facts and definitions you need to know using bullets. The most important thing is to keep the study guide organized. Instead of putting all the information from the notes together and keeping that separate from the textbook information, combine them so each concept is together. For example, if in a biology class your teacher and the textbook both

mentioned cell division, take all that information and put it together under one heading on your study guide (“cell division”).

Again, don’t fall into the trap of trying to put too much on your study guide. If it gets too long, it won’t help you very much. Be concise, and really pick and choose what is most important. And if you know a term or subject really well, you don’t need to include it. Don’t spend time studying what you already know, or what the teacher might not even put on the test.

Using Your Study Guide

There are many ways to study now that you have a guide. Reading it over is one way, though not the best. Just reading the information doesn’t tell you if you know it or not. So find a way to force yourself to have to recall the information. Get a friend to quiz you, or just cover up the bullet points under each key word or concept and try to remember the definitions and details on your own.

****You can also use your study guide to create note cards.** **Just put the key word or concept on one side and the bulleted information on the other. Note cards force you to recall information, and you can always do the ones you have trouble with over and over again. Finally, studying in a group can be helpful if everyone is focused—other people might have information in their notes or on their study guides that you missed.