

## Quizzes, Tests, Exam...What's in a Name

Types of Test Questions	
<b>Essay</b>	Requires a fairly extended, on-the-spot composition about some topic. Examples include questions that call on you to describe a person, process, or event, or those that ask you to compare or contrast two separate sets of material.
<b>Multiple-Choice</b>	Usually contains a question or statement, followed by a number of possible answers (usually 4 or 5 of them). You are supposed to choose the best response from the choices offered.
<b>True-false</b>	Presents statement about a topic that are either accurate or inaccurate. You are to indicate whether each statement is accurate (true) or inaccurate (false).
<b>Matching</b>	Presents two lists of related information, arranged in column form. Typically, you are asked to pair up the items that go together (e.g., a scientific term and its definition, or a writer and the title of a book he wrote).
<b>Short-answer</b>	Requires brief responses (usually a few sentences at most) in a kind of mini-essay.
<b>Fill-in</b>	Requires you to add one or more missing words to a sentence or series of sentences.

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Although they may vary from one instructor to another, the following definitions are most commonly used:

**Quizzes:** A **quiz** is a brief assessment, usually covering a relatively small amount of material. Some quizzes cover as little as one class's worth of reading. Although a single quiz usually doesn't count very much, instructors often add quiz scores together, and collectively they can become a significant part of your final course grade.

**Tests:** A **test** is a more intense, a more heavily weighted assessment than a quiz, covering more material. A test may come every few weeks of the term, often after each third or quarter of the term has passed, but this varies with the instructor and the course.

**Exams:** An **exam** is the most substantial kind of assessment. In many classes, just one exam is given—a final, exam at the end of the term. Sometimes there are two exams, one at the midpoint of the term (called, of course, a midterm) and the second at the end. These exams are usually weighted quite heavily because they are meant to assess your knowledge of all the course material covered up to the point.

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## Match Test Preparation to Question Types

Test questions come in different types and each require a somewhat different style of preparation.

**Essay questions.** Essay tests focus on the big picture—ways in which the various pieces of information being tested fit together. You'll need to know not just a series of facts, but also the connections between them, and you will have to be able to discuss these ideas in an organized and logical way.

The best approach to studying for an essay test involves four steps:

1. Carefully reread your class notes and any notes you've made on assigned readings that will be covered on the upcoming exam. Also go through the readings themselves, reviewing underlined or highlighted material and marginal notes.
2. Play professor: Think of likely exam questions. To do this, you can use the key words, phrases, concepts, and questions that come up in your class notes or in your text. Some instructors give out lists of possible essay topics; if yours does, focus on the list, but don't ignore other possibilities.
3. Without looking at your notes or your readings, answer each potential essay question—aloud. Don't feel embarrassed about doing this. Talking aloud is often more useful than answering the question in your head.

You can also write down the main points that any answer should cover. (Don't write out complete answers to the questions unless your instructor tells you in advance exactly what is going to be on the test. Your time is probably better spent learning the material than rehearsing precisely formulated responses.)

4. After you've answered the questions, check yourself by looking at the notes and readings once again. If you feel confident that you've answered particular questions adequately, check them off. You can go back later for a quick review. But if there are questions that you had trouble with, review that material immediately. Then repeat the third step above, answering the questions again.

- **Short-answer and fill questions.** Short-answer and fill-in questions are similar to essays in that they require you to recall key pieces of information rather than finding it on the page in front of you. However, short answer and fill-in questions—unlike essay questions—typically don't demand that you integrate or compare different types of information. Consequently, the focus of your study should be on the recall of specific, detailed information.

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- **Multiple-choice, true-false, and matching questions.** While the focus of review for essay questions should be on major issues and controversies, studying for multiple-choice, true-false, and matching questions requires more attention to the details.

Almost anything is fair game for multiple-choice, true-false, and matching questions, so you can't afford to overlook anything when studying. True, these kinds of questions put the material right there on the page for you to react to—did Columbus land in 1492 or not?—rather than asking you to provide the names and dates yourself (as in the case of the essay question). Nevertheless, to do well on these tests you must put your memory into high gear and master a great many facts.

It's a particularly good idea to write down important facts on index cards. Remember the advantages of these cards: They're portable and available all the time, and the act of creating them helps drive the material into your memory. Furthermore, you can shuffle them and test yourself repeatedly until you've mastered the material. Also, you can try **Quizlet & Cram Apps**.

It also can be helpful to write the name of a particular concept or theory on one side of a note card, and then to generate and write an example of it on the other side. Studying the cards will ensure that you fully understand the concepts and theories and can generalize them to different situations.