

## SOME TIPS FOR STUDYING BIOLOGY

### Reading your text.

Your text should be read at least 3 times

1. Skim before class to get major ideas and the gist of what the instructor will be talking about.
2. After lecture, pay close attention to those concepts that were difficult. Return to the text and reread, taking notes and annotating your book. Pay particular attention to the diagrams and pictures. Also pay attention to those parts of the text that help you to understand what you found difficult in the lecture
3. Take notes on the text – outline using the text structure to help you. Compose concepts maps for the entire chapter or for parts of the chapter you need to know better. Make study cards. Always connect the big concepts to the smaller ones. DO NOT STUDY WORDS RANDOMLY.
4. Pay close attention to diagrams and try to reproduce them without looking at the picture. This is not about producing a work of art, but understanding the concept or process that is being described
5. Try to answer the questions at the back of the chapter, paying attention to application type questions or questions labeled critical thinking

### Studying Biology

1. Biology is almost a full time job. You should study your biology notes as soon as possible after each class. You should coordinate your reading with your notes making sure you cover any material you did not understand in class
2. If lectures appear overwhelming with information, tape your lecture and take notes from the tape at a later time
3. Biology is an ongoing process. Make sure you understand the first concept or chapter before trying to go on to the next.
4. Use the online support available through your textbook.
5. If you are having difficulty understanding a process such as how protein is manufactured in the cell, put that phrase in google followed by the word animation and you will come up with scores of animations that help you to visualize the process.
6. Recite, review and reflect to help you remember. Make associations and use mnemonics to help you remember important parts or ideas.
7. Take notes, use concept maps, outlines, pictures diagrams.
8. Studying is an individual process. Your learning style will help to determine what works best for you.

## COUNTDOWN FOR A BIOLOGY EXAM

The end of the semester is near. It might seem like there is a mountain of information containing unusual and unknown names. The task may seem impossible but with this plan it is EASY.

**6th day before the test:** Time to breakdown Biology into categories of subject matter such as Fungi, Plant, Lower Animals, etc. There should be about 3-4 MAIN ideas. Review your notes and circle any things that you don't understand. Look in the book or ask a professor, TA or another student to get everything clarified. Now you are ready for the countdown.

**5th day:** Study your 1st category of subject matter on your list. Study as if you have the exam tomorrow. Use notecards for names and examples.

**4th day:** Give yourself a quick quiz on the matter you studied last night or test yourself with a friend. Reward yourself if you pass. Now start the 2nd category of material and finish only when you can pass the test on that subject tomorrow.

**3rd day:** Again, quiz yourself or test yourself with a friend on yesterdays material. Study the 3rd category of material.

**2nd day:** Do the test thing again today. If there is a 4th category, learn that today. If not, test yourself on the whole chapter.

A good thing to do this day is get together with a friend for a question-and-answer session. The night before the test may not be a good time to do this because the other person may hinder your progress or not concentrate on what YOU need to know (when you teach biology to a friend you learn a lot).

Highlight in your notes everything you still do not know or are unsure of.

**DAY BEFORE THE FINAL:** Make a list of all the highlighted information you still don't know. STUDY those and the little details you may have overlooked before. Review the notes one last time. By now you should know everything like the back of your hand. SIT BACK AND RELAX!! YOU ARE PREPARED!! Go to bed early and reward yourself for not having to cram.

**TIMING:** For each category, it should take about 2-3 hours more or less to learn each category. That leaves lots of time for other things. Also, days 1+2 can be combined if time is a problem.

## **MULTIPLE-CHOICE TESTS:**

1. Read the questions carefully.
2. Trust your instincts. Do not randomly change answers because you are unsure you are correct. Often first instincts are the best bet.
3. Always try to guess what the answer is BEFORE you look at the choices.
4. If you are unsure about an answer, eliminate what it CAN'T be. Try to remember if any of the answers left are related to that subject. Do you remember seeing that word in the chapter?  
If you have never heard of a choice it is probably a distractor. If you can not recognize a choice then it is probably NOT the answer.
5. After eliminating all other choices, take a logical guess. At least you have narrowed down the odds of getting the answer correct. Remember, the first guess is usually more reliable unless you obtain a major revelation along the way.
6. If after a few seconds you are still perplexed, mark the question so you can find it easier later and go on with the test. Sometimes the answer you're looking for is given in a different problem. Go back to that question later.
7. NEVER leave a multiple choice question blank. You have a 20-25% chance of getting it right by guessing.

**ALL-OF-THE-ABOVE QUESTIONS:** If 2 or more of the answers are correct, then the all-of-the-above option is the correct answer, EVEN IF you are unsure of the third option.

**LOOK-ALIKE OPTIONS:** Sometimes there are 2 options that are alike except for one word. Such a pair indicates that the question is focused there. USUALLY, not always, you can assume the answer is one of that pair.

**QUESTIONS WITH ALL OR NOTHING MODIFIERS** –questions that say all of the following or none of the following are usually incorrect because something is rarely always or never.

**QUESTIONS WITH BOTH OF THE ABOVE OR THE CHOICE OF TWO ANSWERS** (such as a and b or b and c as an option) are usually correct especially if there are more than 5 options. Instructors want to test how much you know.