



## POSSE: A STUDY PLAN FOR OBJECTIVE EXAMS

**POSSE:** a system that helps you identify your study goals and make plans for achieving them.

- Writing answers to the questions instead of verbally answering them forces you to concentrate more fully on each question.
- Provides a means of reviewing your responses. Your success depends on your honesty in dealing with such issues.
- It is important that you begin the POSSE process at least a week before the test is scheduled to allow time for distributed practice.
- To complete the stages of POSSE, you should consult your instructor, text, course syllabus, lecture notes, or other materials.

### PLAN:

- What does the test cover?
- Is the test comprehensive or noncomprehensive?
- How many questions will the test contain?
- Will the test require me to apply information?
- How much does this test count in my final course grade?
- When is the test?
- Where will the test be given?

### ORGANIZE:

- What materials do I need to study: Textbook? handouts? Lecture notes? Supplemental readings? Old exams?
- What study and memory methods will work best with this material?
- Can I find a study partner or group to prepare for this test?
- Can I predict test questions by: answering chapter review questions? examining old exams? questioning former students or the instructor to obtain clues about test item construction? creating a practice test of key points? completing a practice test and go over the responses with my instructor?
- Gather all study materials together. Construct study and memory aids.

### SCHEDULE:

- How much time do I have before the exam?
- How much time will I need to study for this test?
- How much time each day will I study?
- How will I distribute my study time?
- Where will I study?
- When will I meet with my study group or partner?
- What obligations do I have that might interfere with this study time?

### STUDY *At the end of each study session, answer these questions:*

- Am I studying actively, that is, through writing or speaking?
- Am I distributing my study time to avoid memory interference and physical fatigue?
- Am I following my study schedule? Why or why not?
- What adjustments do I need to make?
- Am I learning efficiently? Why or why not? What adjustments do I need to make?

### EVALUATE:

- What type of questions did I miss most often?
- What changes can I make to my study plan to avoid such trends in the future?



## Specific Strategies to Improve Learning & Prepare for Tests

Strategy	When to Use it
<b>Concept Mapping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand the “whys, hows, and what ifs”</li> <li>• To get the big picture</li> <li>• To summarize when reading</li> <li>• To test judgment of learning</li> </ul>
<b>Flash Cards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To learn the details or the “whats”</li> <li>• For vocabulary, formulas, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Study groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help with gaps in information and to test knowledge of concepts</li> </ul>
<b>Outlines, lists, charts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To learn major concepts, order of events, or to get the big picture</li> </ul>
<b>Highlighting and color coding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To denote the importance of something or to differentiate one topic from another</li> </ul>
<b>Word play</b> mneumnonics rhymes songs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help with memorizing details and facts</li> </ul>
<b>Re-writing or typing notes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To synthesize material from several sources or to create a clean set of notes</li> </ul>
<b>Recording lectures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have a professor whom you have trouble understanding.</li> <li>• If you are an aural learner</li> </ul>
<b>Tutoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help with areas in which you are having problems or just to get a better understanding of concepts</li> </ul>
<b>Study review sessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help with areas in which you are having problems or just to get a better understanding of concepts</li> </ul>
<b>Testing your knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure you know the material well enough to be tested on it</li> </ul>



## Objective Tests

On objective tests, teachers provide answers from which you choose the correct one.

- One part of the question, the **stem**, gives basic information.
  - You pick your answer from among **distractors**, or possible answers.
    - o Test-wise principles help you make educated guesses among distractors when you are not sure of the right answer.
1. If you don't know an answer, skip it and go on.
  2. When you return to questions you skipped, try to figure out what the answer is not.
  3. Read all choices before answering a multiple-choice question.
  4. Use what you know to analyze and make decisions about information.
  5. Read carefully & look for giveaway clues: Sometimes instructors provide information about one question when asking another.
  6. If a multiple-choice question confuses you, consider the stem and each distractor as a true-false question. (This helps you think about each piece of information separately.)
  7. Cross out choices that you know are incorrect. Choose from the distractors that remain.
  8. Try to determine the relationships between the columns on matching exams: Sometimes a matching exam is a hodgepodge of terms and information. Other times, it focuses more on dates, locations, events, people, causes, effects, and so forth. Identifying the relationships helps you focus your thoughts in an organized manner.
  9. Review your exam before turning it in.

## Problem-Solving Tests

### Before

1. Review class notes and reading. List the major concepts and formulas from both.
  - Highlight items your instructor emphasized and note why they're important.
3. The single best way to prepare for problem-solving tests is to solve problems—lots of them.
  - Be sure to work problems not previously assigned.
4. Analyze all problems you work by answering the following questions
  - What concepts, formulas, and rules did I apply?
  - What methods did I use?
  - How did I begin?
  - Have I seen this problem before?
  - Is it similar or dissimilar to other problems I've done?
  - How does my solution compare with the examples from the book and class?
  - Could this problem be worked another way? Can I simplify what I did?
6. Look for fundamental problem types. Typically a course has approximately 5 fundamental groups of problems; make sure you can recognize them.
7. Practice working problems out of sequence. For example, work a problem from Chapter 7, then one from Chapter 5, then one from Chapter 10. This randomness will allow you to see how different problems relate to each other and will simulate the test-taking experience.
8. Work with a time limit. Aim to solve as many problems as you will have on the test within the test time limit (i.e., 30 problems in 50 minutes).
9. Create a practice test. Consider cutting and pasting a test together from homework problems.



## During

1. Before starting the test, turn it over and jot down all the formulas, relationships, definitions, etc. that you need to remember.
2. Review the whole test, skimming the questions and developing a general plan for your work. If any thoughts come to you immediately, write them in the margin.
3. Plan your time. Allow more time for high point value problems, and reserve time at the end for reviewing your work and fixing any emergencies.
4. Start with the easier problems, i.e. the ones for which you can specify a solution method quickly. This will reduce anxiety and facilitate clear thinking.
5. Break more difficult problems into a series of smaller problems, then work each part.
6. If all else fails, mark the problem and return to it later. You may find clues in subsequent problems that will help you find a solution.
8. For all problems, both easy and difficult, don't forget the following tips:
  - Once you're established the solution method, follow it carefully. Check each step for consistency in notation. Document all your work thoroughly and neatly so it's legible.
  - Evaluate your solutions. Check your answer against the original problem to make sure it fits.
9. Try all test problems. If your mind goes blank, relax for a moment and contemplate the problem or mark it and return to it later.
10. If you run out of time and still have problems remaining, try to set the problem up in a solution plan so that you'll have a chance of receiving partial credit.