

### **Cramming for Exams?**

Final exams are here again! Unfortunately, many students often spend their time right before exams doing what they should have been doing all term long. This is euphemistically referred to as “cramming”. Research concludes that this is a poor way to master material.

Much better methods exist. However, here we are. The exams are looming! A great deal of work needs to be done. How does a parent help? For most students a study session usually consists of looking over their notes and re-reading parts of the textbook. The student’s mind is often somewhere else during this time. But this type of “study” does not work! Instead, suggest this approach to your student and be prepared to get involved. Ask your son or daughter to:

“Pretend that you are the teacher and predict what questions will be on the exam. Write these questions down. Write lots of them. Your list of questions will be even better if you can work with a friend.”

Studies show that students average 70% accuracy when predicting possible test questions!

“Write each question on a 3x5 card and the answer on the back. Carry these cards with you wherever you go. Use them all day long during small chunks of time that would normally be lost (i.e. walking to school). Work by yourself or with a partner (i.e. parent). When possible, study out loud. Ask the question. Look away and say the answer. Check your answer. If you got it right, put it in your pocket. If you got it wrong, place it at the bottom of the pile. Work until all the cards have been answered. Shuffle the cards before the next session.”

Why does this strategy work so well? Firstly, it is focused. The student is studying what is most likely to appear on the exam. Secondly, it is active. Active involvement, with the use of questions, prevents mind wandering. Thirdly, it forces students to spend more time studying what they do not know. Research shows that most people tend to study what they already know. Why? Because it’s easier! Finally, this strategy ensures that the student is studying for recall and not recognition. This strategy is used by many students and the results are impressive.

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