

October 2021 Issue 8

ASCENDTALKS:

STUDY TIPS FOR THE AVERAGE ONLINE STUDENT

Monthly Inspiration:

*"You don't have to be great to start but you have to start to be great,"
Zig Ziglar*

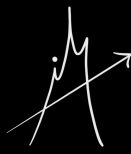
With midterms right around the corner, and students encountering their first set of midterms for the semester , it's important to remember there are ways to prepare from beforehand. This month's newsletter will focus on ways to stay focused and be ready for your exams!

Resources to help keep you on track

Anki or Quizlet → Alessia recommends this program to any student who is taking memorization-heavy courses, like biology! It is a flashcard program that uses a spaced repetition algorithm to help you commit information into long-term memory.

Video Speed Controller → This is a chrome extension that allows you to speed up, slow down, advance and rewind any video with quick shortcuts. This allows you to watch online lectures in half the amount of time.

Momentum → A pretty home screen every time you open a new Google Chrome tab, fit with a To-do list, to help you stay on task all day.



iAscend Spotlight

Alessia Priore

Hello, my name is Alessia! I'm a fourth year student studying at the University of Toronto pursuing a Specialist in Neuroscience and a Double Minor in Biology and Psychology. If you have any other questions, email :
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How would you describe midterm season to a first year student (e.g. what to expect/advice)?

To be honest, midterm season is demanding and not too enjoyable. In my opinion, I think that midterm season is more stressful than final season since one is expected to study, watch lectures, and complete assignments simultaneously (whereas finals season is mostly just studying 24/7). Depending on my courses, I have around 8-10 midterms and 5 final exams every semester. Midterms typically start the first week of October and they last until the last week of November. Midterms are similar to high school tests — the only difference is that you are expected to know a lot more content. Final exams are worth more than midterms and they are usually cumulative.

What are some efficient and effective study tips you recommend using to study for midterms?

1. Review your notes every single day. Even if it's just a quick read-through, it is scientifically proven that this will greatly increase your ability to recall what you've learned and it will save so much time during midterm season
2. Know yourself. This statement may seem ambiguous, but in reality, this concept is really important. These are some questions to consider: "What time of the day am I the most productive?", "Approximately how many hours will it take me to watch this lecture and make notes?", "How many days do I need to study in advance in order to learn all the testable material?"
3. Create a realistic schedule and stick to it. Be specific and outline your goals every hour of the day. Don't forget to include breaks — this is crucial so you don't burn out!
4. Eliminate distractions. Whenever I study for an exam, I turn my phone off and put it in my closet so it's out of sight. I can't study for long periods of time so I use the Pomodoro technique.



How do you keep track of all your upcoming midterms as well as mentally prepare for the midterm season?

When it comes to keeping track of midterms and assignments, I am very “old-school” — I write down all of my assignments and midterms dates in an agenda and paper calendar. I also make a list of everything that I want to accomplish everyday. It is really satisfying when you complete a task and are able to cross it off of your to-do list.

Are all midterms formatted the same style (e.g. multiple choice, short answer, etc.) or does it depend on the course?

The format of midterms depends entirely on the course and the instructor. In my experience, the majority of my first year midterms were typically multiple choice whereas second & third year exams were a combination of both multiple choice and short/long answer questions. The fourth year courses that I am currently taking are seminar-based so there are no midterms or finals... just a lot of reading, writing research papers, and presentations!

Did you find a difference in your preparation methods for midterms that took place pre-covid vs. open book midterms? If so, how did you adjust accordingly?

There is a common misconception that open-book exams are easier than closed-book exams because students can look through notes during the test. This is not necessarily true. I recommend preparing as if it was a closed-book, in-person exam. It is difficult to keep pace if you rely on looking through your notes or the internet for the questions. A better strategy is to create a 1-2 page “cheat sheet” that summarizes important concepts, definitions, or equations. Open-book exams have strict time limits (some of my professors even implemented a time-limit per question) and I found these exams to focus on analysis and application, rather than memorization. The majority of my professors also prevented the ability to “back-track” in order to deter students from cheating with classmates. This means that your answers are locked and you will not be able to double-check your work at the end even if you have extra time remaining.



What are some tips to de-stress and get concentrated to prepare during midterm season?

Take frequent breaks
Exercise and go outside
Get lots of sleep
Study and review the material with friends

Are there any specific test taking strategies you use?

Always double-check your work if you finish early!
Start with the easy questions first
Highlight important words or phrases in the question
Answer as many questions to the best of your ability
Eliminate incorrect multiple choice answers

Have you ever experienced test anxiety right before taking a midterm? If so, how did you overcome that feeling?

Yes, definitely! It's important to realize that test anxiety is very normal and is a feeling that everyone experiences, regardless of how comfortable one may feel with the course content. For me, I try to not put too much pressure on myself and remain optimistic. It's inevitable that you may receive bad grades through university. During times like these, it's crucial to take a step back, do some introspection and realize that it's not the end of the world. Keep a positive attitude and don't lose motivation. There have been so many instances where I performed poorly on a midterm and still ended the course with a high mark. You got this :)

A Message about the Past Newsletter

The September newsletter about COVID-19 guidelines on campus has been updated with more recent information. Be sure to check out the updated version [here](#).

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