

Learning from an Exam

1. Compare what you thought would be on the exam to what was actually on it. (This allows you to determine whether you studied the appropriate content.)
 - For problem solving exams: Compare the exam to the homework/problem sets. How were the problems similar? How were they different? Did the exam require you to combine different types of problems?
 - For all exams: Compare the exam to your reading and class notes. Did you emphasize and understand the right concepts? Did the exam require you to make connections between different readings or ideas?
2. Find out what errors you made and determine why you missed each item.
 - Test Preparation Errors:
 - Studying the wrong material
 - Not reviewing certain key concepts and ideas
 - Studying too much material, too fast, as the deadline approached
 - Didn't fully understand something or forgot
 - Test Taking Errors
 - Didn't read directions carefully
 - Misread or misinterpreted question
 - Carelessness in computation
 - Poor organization of answer
 - Poor support (selection of points) of answer
 - Tried to avoid the question by writing around it
 - Inaccurately drawn sketches of diagrams
 - Writing too much and exposing lack of knowledge
 - Writing too little
 - Incomplete answers due to running out of time
3. Decide how you can avoid the above problems in the next exam (i.e. preparing differently, slowing down to avoid making careless mistakes, obtaining tips on how to answer essay questions, etc.).
4. Don't forget to check your correct answers too. You may have been considering two different answers during testing and took a lucky guess.
5. For problem solving courses, try redoing problems that you had difficulty with on the exam. For all types of courses, reconsider your answers, perhaps outlining a more thorough or correct response.
6. Review the exam with your professor. Ask your professor for specific criticism or ways to improve your test-taking skills in the course.
7. Keep in mind that concepts that are important enough to appear on the test will most likely appear on a cumulative final exam. Therefore, past exams can be excellent resources for studying for final exams.