

# Exam Taking Strategies

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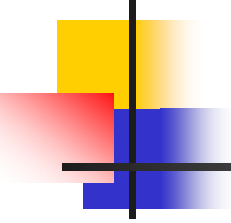




# Why these workshops were developed...

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- Because 1/10<sup>th</sup> of all students here drop out in first quarter!
- Many of these students say that they can't manage their lives and the workload created by their courses



# The purpose of these workshops...

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- To help you be successful
- To help you manage stress, create outstanding portfolios and land a job!
- To orient you to college workloads
- To increase student retention



# Exam Taking Strategies

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## **2-3 Weeks Before the Exam**

- ✓ Check the Course Syllabus for info
- ✓ Talk to your Instructor about what will be covered
- ✓ Talk to previous students to see what exams are like
- ✓ Organize a study schedule for yourself



# What Will Be Covered?

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Comprehensive or Non-Comprehensive?

- Will the exam cover the entire course content to date (comprehensive) or only certain portions?
- Will reading material be covered or just lecture?
- Will material from assignments and projects be covered?



## What Will the Format Be?

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- ✓ What are the kinds of questions?
  - ❑ Multiple choice
  - ❑ Short answer
  - ❑ Essay
  - ❑ True or False; Matching
  - ❑ Computation/Arithmetic/Formulae
  - ❑ Practical demonstration
  - ❑ Charts/Graphs/Drawings/Diagrams





## Other Info to Gather:

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- ✓ How many questions of each type to expect?
- ✓ Where will the exam be held? (don't assume it will be in the same room as your class is held)
- ✓ When will it be held?
- ✓ Do you need any special test materials? (calculator, graph paper, ruler, HB #2 lead pencil!)



## The Day of the Exam

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- ✓ Eat breakfast with Protein in it! Have something with sugar in it 10-20 minutes before you begin.
- ✓ Plan on arriving a little early so you can get the seat you want
- ✓ Try to sit in the same position you do in class. This will help trigger your memory.
- ✓ Avoid looking over information the day of the test.



## The Day of the Exam

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- ✓ Try to go on a short walk or sit in a quiet area before you go into the room. This helps get you focused.
- ✓ Avoid chatting to other students about what they studied .
- ✓ Make sure you bring everything you will need (paper, pens, pencils, graph paper, your lucky socks!)



# 6 Tips for: The Day of the Exam

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#1

## Purge

When you receive your exam paper write down everything you can think of that you studied. Write out any lists you memorized etc.





# The Day of the Exam

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# 2

## Preview

Glance over the whole test to see what parts there are (multiple choice, short answer, fill in the blanks etc.) and note how much each section is worth.



# The Day of the Exam

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## #3 Read

Read all the questions once. As you do this write down a few points for any questions that you think of an answer to that you don't want to forget.

## #4 Underline

Underline key words in directions such as "in point form"; "choose the best"; "circle all answers"; "Compare and Contrast"



## The Day of the Exam

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#5

Answer the easiest questions first

#6

Work at your own pace

It doesn't matter if you are the last person to hand in your paper as long as you said everything you wanted and needed to say.

# Essay Exams

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“How you say what you know is as important as what you know”





## Example:

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In the movie version of **The Fellowship of The Ring (Lord of The Rings)**, Galadriel's voice is the very first voice we hear. Discuss the significance of this as it relates to the events in all 3 books.

25 marks

(the whole exam is worth 100 marks)





# Essay Exams

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- ❑ Assess how much time to spend based on points available
- ❑ Always write an outline and stick to it. If you can't finish your essay you may get points for a well thought out outline.
- ❑ Don't stress about grammar and spelling. Get your ideas down first.
- ❑ Answer the question in the first sentence or two



# More than 1 essay question

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When there is more than one...

- ❑ see if you have a choice about which ones you answer (read the directions!)
- ❑ allot a specific amount of time for each question and when the time is up, stop writing and move on to the next question.
- ❑ 6 partial answers will usually get you more credit than 2-3 full answers
- ❑ It makes instructors believe you know more than you were able to show



# Essay Exams

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- ❑ One idea per paragraph. Make sure the topic sentence of each paragraph is linked to the central question you are trying to answer.
- ❑ Don't offer philosophical speculations, feelings or opinions unless specifically called for.
- ❑ Substantiate your argument with facts, examples and citations. Each paragraph should contain **one** fact/example etc. that supports your answer to the question.



# Essay Exams

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- ❑ At the end, always summarize (restate in different words) the opening sentence where you answered the question.
- ❑ Go back at the end and correct grammar and spelling if there is time.
- ❑ If you are running out of time – Outline how you would have answered the remaining questions



# Essay Exams

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Instructors are influenced by **compactness** and **clarity**. Writing endlessly in the hopes that you may somehow arrive at the right answer is often futile and time consuming.

Knowing a little and presenting it well is often better for these types of exams.

# Open Book Exams

“Having the text is no substitute for knowing what is in it!”





## Open Book Exams

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- Read questions carefully. Look for:
  - Key terms (compare, describe, evaluate, explain)
  - Conditions (two versions of, main evidence for)
  - Signal words (best, however, always, never)



# Open Book Exams

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- ❑ Study the text's table of contents so you can find what you need easily
- ❑ Organize your material/notes into subject areas. Don't waste time thumbing through pages when you could be writing an answer.
- ❑ Don't waste time copying long quotes

# Quantitative Exams

“Unfamiliar problems are often common problems presented in a new way.”





## Quantitative Exams

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- ❑ once more....Read the directions carefully
- ❑ watch out for closely similar words, concepts and formulae
- ❑ Note what data has been given – Use it!
- ❑ Never just provide an answer. Always show your work. You may get marks for proper calculations even though your arithmetic sucks!



## Quantitative Exams

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- ❑ Make your answer obvious. Circle it in **Red**, underline it or set it apart in some way.
- ❑ Erase or cross out what you do not want marked.
- ❑ Proof read for errors and miscalculations
- ❑ If you are allowed a calculator make sure you use it. Don't be a martyr!



# True False Exams

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- ❑ again...Read the statements carefully.
- ❑ If one part of a statement is false then the whole thing is false.
- ❑ Be careful when 2 statements are connected with conjunctions (thus, therefore, consequently, because, since) Each statement may itself be correct but together it doesn't make sense.



# Example

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- Being a student is hard work because students like to party.
- True: Being a student is hard work.
- True: Students like to party.



# Example

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- 1) True or False: Oprah Winfrey was born in Chicago and originally named *Orpah* Winfrey by her parents.
- 2) True or False: Suicide has never been one of the top 3 leading causes of death among college students.



# True False Exams

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- Try reading the statement without negatives or with opposite qualifiers.

Example:

- 1) True or False: Rain is frequent in few deserts.

*Modified version: Rain is infrequent in many deserts.*



# Indicators of True answers

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It's most likely true if:

- ✓ **It's a short statement**
- ✓ There is a qualifier such as "**sometimes, ordinarily, generally**, etc." These make more modest claims and open up the possibilities of making an accurate statement.
- ✓ **You don't know what the answer is!**  
Most questions on True/False exams are True because it is hard for instructors to make a true statement false.



# Indicators of False Answers

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It's most likely false if:

- ✓ It is a long statement.
- ✓ It provides a reason, explanation or justification for the answer.

Test makers do this because they know the answer is false but want to try to sell it to you as true.

# Multiple Choice Exams

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# Multiple Choice Exams

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- ❑ READ THE DIRECTIONS!

- Are you supposed to circle the BEST answer, or ALL correct answers, or the answer that is INCORRECT?

- ❑ Skim the whole exam. If it is a combination exam there might be information in other parts that can help you.



# Multiple Choice Exams

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Example:

Choose the best answer.

- 1) Which two languages were the basis for the Elvish language in ***The Lord of The Rings*** trilogy?
  - a) Finnish & Welsh
  - b) English & Welsh
  - c) Gaelic & Finnish
  - d) Gaelic & Welsh





## Multiple Choice Exams

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- Look for qualifiers and key terms, and underline them. Beware of the following:

*Always, invariably, necessarily, never, all*

- Watch for double or hidden negatives:

“It is unwise not to study for an exam”  
*means* “It is wise to study for an exam”.



# Multiple Choice Exams

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- ❑ Always go with your first impulse unless you are sure it is wrong.
- ❑ Try to guess the answer before you read the options. If your guess is not among the options then abandon it.
- ❑ Try each choice with the main part of the statement. The resulting sentence should not only make sense but be grammatically correct.

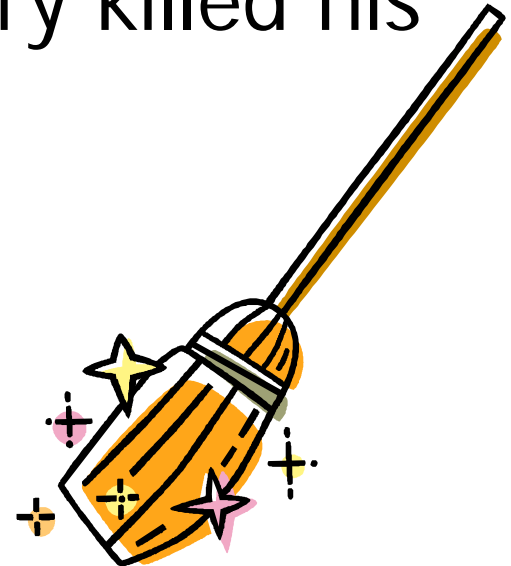
# Multiple Choice Exams

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Example:

Choose the best answer.

- 1) In the book(s) Harry Potter what do the Dursleys tell Harry killed his parents?
  - a) Lord Voldemort
  - b) Car Crash
  - c) Plane Crash
  - d) Severus Snape



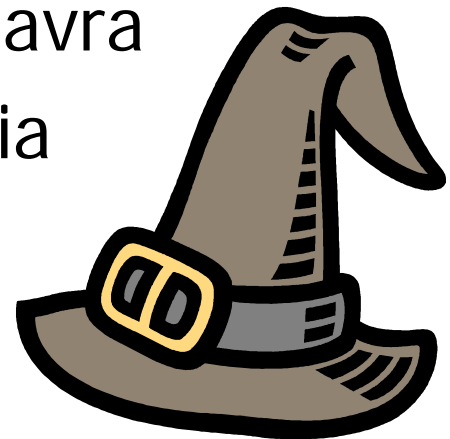


# Multiple Choice Exams

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Example:

- 1) In the book Harry Potter, \_\_\_\_\_ are all considered to be Unforgivable Curses. Choose the correct answer.
  - a) Draconius, Maleficencia, Avada Kedavra
  - b) Cruciatus, Imperius, Avada Kedavra
  - c) Imperius, Cruciatus, Maleficencia
  - d) All of the above





# Multiple Choice Exams

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- ❑ If you don't know the right answer – guess, unless you will lose marks for wrong answers. Find out what the case is before you begin writing.
- ❑ Not all questions are designed to trick you. Often the question really is asking what it sounds like it's asking. Don't hunt for tricks.
- ❑ In order to do well on Multiple Choice exams you need to study in more detail than usual. Make sure you pay attention to facts, details, lists, sequences, steps etc.



# Indicators of correct answers

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- ✓ answers that are in the mid-range of something

Example:

The height of Mt. Multiple

- a) 2000 – 5000'
- b) 5000-10,000'
- c) 10,000-20,000'



# Indicators of Correct Answers

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- ✓ Longer, more descriptive answers  
(shorter answers were usually created quickly as throw-aways)
- ✓ One of two similar answers is usually correct

# Short Answer Exams

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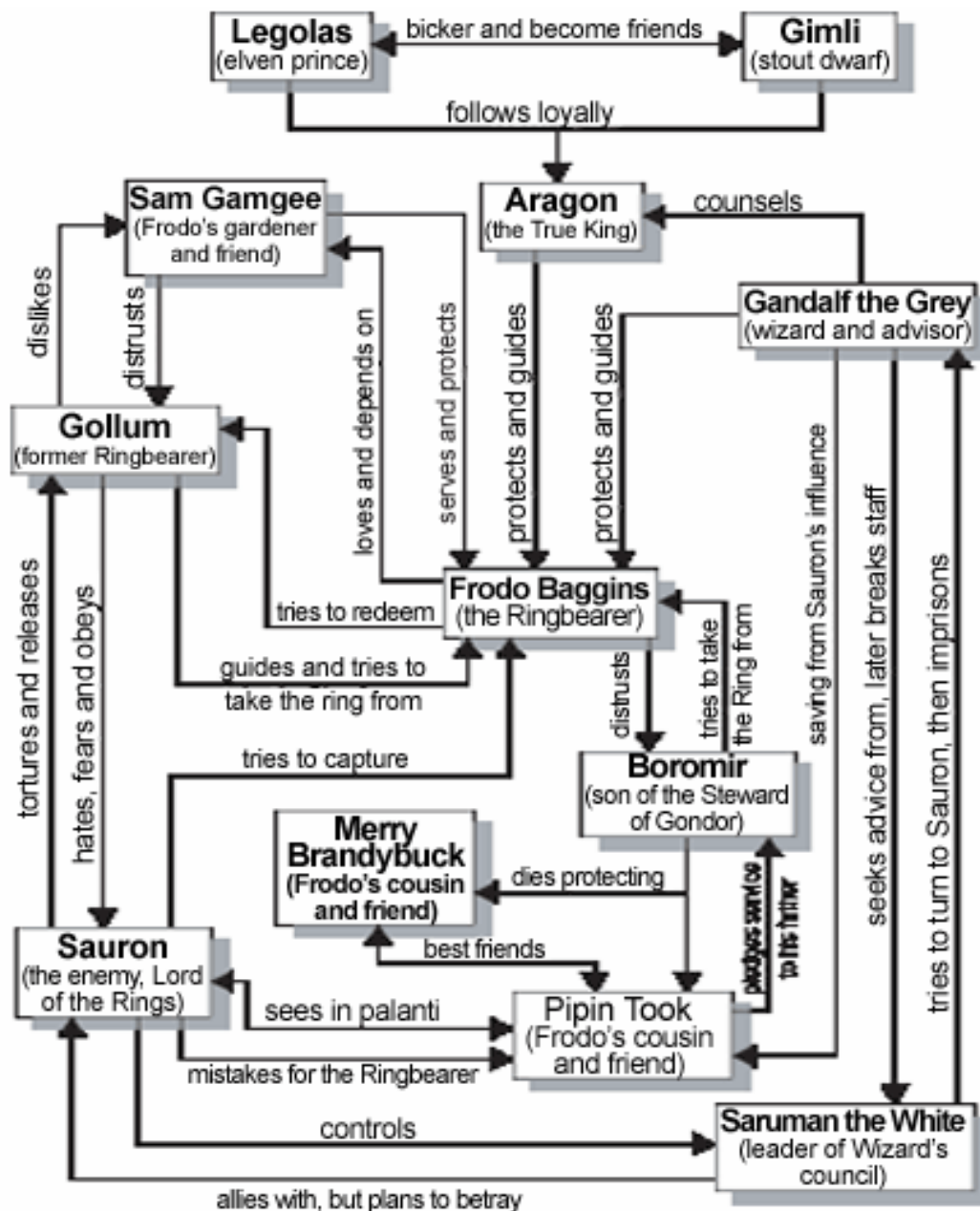


# Short Answer Exams

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- ❑ Understand what is being asked before you start. Is it point form, in order, can you use diagrams or graphs, one word answers or sentence answers etc. ?
- ❑ If you provide charts or diagrams you are still responsible for clearly labeling them
- ❑ If you are required to list steps to a process, assume the examiner wants them in order!
- ❑ If you are not exactly sure about an answer, write more rather than less. You might get more marks because you accidentally touched on something important.

# Character Diagram





# Short Answer Exams

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Example:

In point form please answer the following:

- 1) In point form, explain what a Dementor is.  
(From the book Harry Potter)
- 2) In chronological order please list the famous actresses that Brad Pitt has dated.
- 3) Using a diagram please explain how to get from ETC Soundstage to my office.



# Exam Taking Strategies

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- ✓ It is a known, and well researched, fact that the human brain remembers more when it is relaxed.
- ✓ If you are having exam anxiety which is interfering with your ability to effectively show your knowledge, you may want to speak to the Counselor (That's Me!) about learning some relaxation methods. OR
- ✓ Attend one of the Exam Anxiety Workshops held by Counseling Services/Student Success Committee.



## How to Get in touch with the Counselor:

- Burnaby: 604-298-5400
- Vancouver: 604-683-9200
- E-mail: [mpinfield@aii.edu](mailto:mpinfield@aii.edu)

