

TAKE-HOME AND ONLINE EXAMS

You will likely have access to the material you'll be tested on, but take-home and online exams still require studying and careful preparation. You will need to organize your materials and notes in order to retrieve information quickly and effectively.

Knowing the course content well will improve your chances of doing well in the exam: there might not be a timer running, but you likely will not have time to learn as you go.

As with all exams, your goal for each question is to meet your professor's implicit expectations. Remote exams often come with higher expectations, such as in the quality of your thinking or the depth of your knowledge and references. It is a good idea to gather your thoughts on a subject or create a guide for yourself to respond effectively to these expectations.

Be sure to know the ways the exam will run before you begin. For instance, some online tests do not allow you to go back to previous questions and change your answers, meaning that you need to be sure of your responses before moving on. Carefully read any instructions that you have and if you can, ask questions in advance.

Preparing to take remote exams

- Choose your space carefully to avoid unwanted interruptions and distractions: let those around you know that you will be writing an exam and need to concentrate. If you are distracted by phone notifications, put your phone on silent or turn it off.
- Have all your materials ready, such as:
 - Computer and power cable,
 - Access to reliable internet and power,
 - Textbooks, lecture slides, notes, writing utensils and paper.
- Make sure you know what tools are and are not allowed: when in doubt, ask your instructor or TA.
- Avoid academic offences:
 - Write in your own words and cite as necessary to avoid plagiarism.
 - Do not contact peers who are writing the same exam and do not share answers.
 - Do not copy, distribute or share the questions after the exam is finished.
- Be sure to:
 - Stay on the exam website, using another browser window to search for any needed information.
 - Check your work for mistakes.
 - Save backups of information in case of glitches: for instance, you might be able to write your paper in a word processor and paste it into the exam site.
 - Click "submit" and keep a record of submission or receipt such as a screen shot.
- If you have technological problems, document and report any issues immediately!

Some different types of take-home exams:

General strategies for preparing for and writing tests can be found on the Exam Tips handout (uoft.me/testandexamtips), available on the Centre for Learning Strategy Support website (studentlife.utoronto.ca). Here are a few additional suggestions for types of exams you might encounter:

Essay and long-answer exams:

- Don't only rely on your ability to find the information that you need while you are writing. To best prepare for an open book exam, create your own study and reference notes by using charts, graphic organizers, concept maps or reference guides to organize main topics, themes and information. For instance, an index of topics and page references (or their equivalents) will enable you to write more quickly.
- Brainstorm likely subjects, and work up a few compare-and-contrast examples that respond to the themes and concerns of the course.
- Essays especially require various stages of work: developing an idea, planning an outline, finding required information and references, writing and editing. Plan time to do all of these, taking breaks as needed: it can be more effective to write in short bursts than in one long rushed period of time.
- PDF handouts on writing can be found at advice.writing.utoronto.ca and a Writer's Block handout is available at uoft.me/writersblock.

Timed short-answer exams:

- Especially when you need to respond to questions quickly, a short and focused aid sheet is very useful. For instance, consider matching a list of equations with the likely key words or variables that you anticipate getting from the questions. This can help you be prepared for unfamiliar questions that ask you to apply the concepts you have learned in a new way. Design your aid sheet to help you find and apply your information quickly.
- Practice with a timer, and make sure you can use your keyboard effectively. Your preparation should be as similar as possible to the real thing.
- Have plenty of paper on hand to jot down your ideas, and keep your rough work in order if you can go back and check all your answers before submitting. A notebook or numbered pages can help you find the "scratch" work that you've done.

Want to know more?

The Centre for Learning Strategy Support has resources, workshops, events and appointments to support you.

→ look us up online at learningstrategy.utoronto.ca

→ register for appointments and events at folio.utoronto.ca

→ or email us at clss@utoronto.ca