DON’T CRAM!!!

Cramming deposits information in your short term memory. Material reviewed in cramming sessions is not learned. Some students think they have learned the material and will be able to recall it for the midterm or final. Wrong! It’s gone! The information is generally unavailable to recall after one or two days. So, when students rely on cramming they cheat themselves out of a true education.

Cramming is also more work. It takes longer to learn material when it is done under pressure. Cramming does not save time. Cramming also has its limits. If you haven’t cracked a book in any of your courses, have daydreamed through the classes, or haven’t attended, cramming will not help. Cramming for several courses also doesn’t work.

The purpose of cramming, therefore, is only to make the best of a bad situation. Cram to get by in a course so that you can do better next time. If you must cram, try these steps.

Make choices – Don’t try to learn it all when you cram. You can’t. Instead, pick out a few of the most important elements of the course and learn those backwards, forwards, and upside down. If you cover a lot of material lightly, you will recall none of it during the exam. Spend 25% of your time on new material and the other 75% on drilling that material.

Use mind map review sheets and flashcards – Condense the material you have chosen to learn into mind maps. Choose several elements of the mind maps to put on 3x5 cards. Practice recreating the mind maps, complete with illustrations. Drill yourself with the flashcards.

Recite ad nauseam – The key to cramming is recitation. Recitation will burn facts into your brain like no other study method. Go over you material again and again and again.

Relax – Since material studied while cramming is not learned well, you are more likely to freeze or forget it under pressure. Use relaxation techniques to reduce test anxiety.