

Survival 101 for Engineering

Session 1 - Writing Tests and Exams

Ron & Jane Graham School of Professional Development
College of Engineering

Presented by: Sean Maw, PhD, P.Eng.

Oct 7, 2014

Series Objectives

- Enhance your chances of getting to 2nd year and beyond
- Make your life better ...

Series Topics

- Oct 7 is Writing Tests and Exams
- Oct 14 is Effective Study Habits and Test Preparations
- Oct 21 is Managing Your Personal Finances
- Oct 28 is ??

Today's Objective

- Improve your performance on tests/exams



It's Test/Exam Time ...

- You're sitting down to write your test/exam
- What is your enemy?

PANIC!

- What are your friends?

Confidence and Focus

- What is your objective?

Marks

Panic

- How can you avoid panicking?
 - a) Good preparations, body and mind (next week's session)
 - b) Set the bar as low as you can (to reduce pressure) i.e. know what you need to do to pass the course which is usually fairly easy to do
 - c) Take a deep breath (lower your heart rate)
 - d) Avoid distractions (stay on your game)
 - e) Stick to a routine with pencils, pens, good luck charms, preparations on the day of, etc (comfort food for the mind)
 - f) Carefully prepare a "formula sheet" if that's allowed

Confidence and Focus

- How can you enhance confidence and focus?
 - a) First, quickly read/review the whole test/exam (taking note of how marks are awarded for the questions on the test)
 - b) Then, start with the questions that are easy and work your way up ... if none look easy, go straight to c)
 - c) Get busy and stay busy until your hand needs a break
 - d) Earplugs i.e. get rid of audio distractions
 - e) Just look at paper/test/exam i.e. get rid of visual distractions
 - f) Remind yourself to focus on task, as needed i.e. get rid of mental distractions
 - g) No negative self-talk allowed!! It's a mental downer

Marks

- How do you optimize your final mark?
 - a) You're most efficient at getting marks when you're a machine (i.e. when you don't have to think too hard), so start with the easy questions
 - b) Check your work every few minutes i.e. don't go too deep into a question without making sure your calculations are correct etc.
 - c) **NEVER** spend more than 5-10 minutes trying to figure out how to do a question, unless it's the last question left

Marks

- How do you optimize your final mark?
 - d) With about $1/6^{\text{th}}$ of the time left,
 - i. If you're not done, go for the low-hanging fruit i.e. the part marks (otherwise, go to the easiest questions left ... which you should already be on anyways!)
 - ii. If you are done, take the time to check your work (and make it neater if it's hard to read)
 - e) Know how the types of questions on the exam will be marked before you write the exam i.e. ask a TA or the professor (for example, will part marks be awarded and must you show your work?)

Just before the Test/Exam

- In the hours before, build up the confidence and focus going in ...
 - a) Get a normal amount of sleep
 - b) Eat a normal/boring meal and/or maintain a normal daily schedule (no new foods or drinks!)
 - c) Don't study hard on the day-of if it's a test/exam later in the day (trust your prep, and study the easy to medium stuff to build confidence ... trust your earlier prep)
 - d) Pee before the exam
 - e) Get your routine in order



Q&A

