

# Hints for Taking Math and Science Exams

Most exams in math and science involve problems where you must apply the concepts and techniques learned in the course to new situations.

## **Before the Exam:**

Set up a schedule so that you make time to study every day. Cramming the night before will not lead to success.

Do ALL of the homework problems. For most students, the course grade or exam grade is directly proportional to the number of problems they do. Build confidence by mastering the easier ones before tackling the very difficult ones.

When you seek help from your instructor or the O'Neill Center be prepared with a list of specific questions. Show the professor your attempts at the problem, and he or she will be able to offer more help.

Get plenty of rest the night before and eat something nutritious the day of the exam. (Fresh fruit is recommended to reduce stress.)

Arrive early for the test, so that you have time to relax and do not feel rushed before you even get started.

## **During the Exam:**

Do the easy problems first. Skip the questions that you can not immediately answer; later the tougher questions might look more familiar or you may get clues from other questions on the exam.

Read the problems carefully. Determine exactly what you are required to find. What does the answer look like? Is it a speed? a temperature? What are the units?

Estimate the answer before you begin to work the problem. It helps to have a rough idea of the size of the answer.

Include the units with all the answers and round them to the proper place (significant digits!) Remember that you do the rounding at the end of your calculation, not before.

Your professor will have worked problems in class and you have worked examples in your text. Try to see the exam problem as another example of a problem you have already solved or studied.

If you feel nervous, remember to take deep breaths to help you relax (nobody will notice). While you are taking deep breaths, replace any negative thoughts with positive thoughts. For example, repeat positive statements to yourself such as "I am relaxed", "I will be OK, I can do this", or "I am prepared".

## **After the Exam:**

Go over every question of every test. Learn how to do the problems you have missed. The ideas in math and science courses build upon each other so that you really want to address any confusion that occurs along the way!