

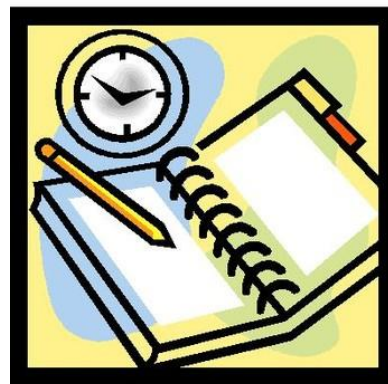
# R.S. McLaughlin EXAM SURVIVAL GUIDE

## 1 Month Before the Exam

**Create a study schedule** – Check the school’s exam schedule and write your exam dates in your agenda. Decide which subjects will require more time and be sure to schedule appropriately (but try to schedule the subjects you like most at the beginning of the schedule as it will help you stick to the routine).

### Prepare for Studying

- Complete the “Exam Study Guide” attached.
- Prepare summary notes for large amounts of lecture and textbook notes.
- Collect your tests, quizzes, and study guides. Create notes surrounding their content, focusing particularly on questions you struggled with on the assessments.
- Use your notes and previous assessments to guess at what might be on the exam.



## 1-2 Weeks Before the Exam

### Begin Studying

- Have a special space in which you can study that is free from distractions. Make sure it is comfortable with a chair and a flat surface.
- Study in 50 minute blocks. At the end of 50 minutes, take a 10 minute break. Have a nutritious snack and a glass of water (this will keep you alert).
- Create a study routine (same time and duration every day)
- Consider your learning style as you review your notes (ex. If you are a visual learner, try to create images or graphs that make the material clearer. If you learn best by listening, make audio files of the most relevant material and listen to them).
- Try to focus on more difficult content right away when your brain feels fresh.
- Try teaching the material to someone else.
- Remember, when you study content two days in a row, leave it for two days, and review it again on the third day, it gets stored in your long term memory.

**Create an Exam Plan** – Look at the format of the test according to the “Exam Study Guide” and plan out how much time you can dedicate to each section based on the length of the exam



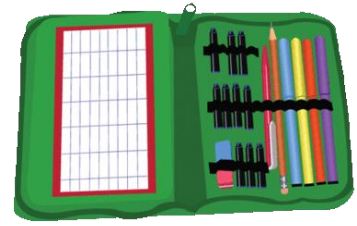
**Attend ALL classes!** - Never skip class to sleep because you were studying all night or skip it to study. Teacher’s often give hints as to what might be on the exam in class. Furthermore, they often review key material, which provides an opportunity to ask more questions.

**Ask teachers specific questions** about content with which you are struggling, or set up some extra help time with your teachers.

## The Day Before

**Briefly review notes**, but try to create a study schedule that does not require any “cramming” the night before.

**Prepare all of the materials** that you will need for the exam in a pencil case and put it in your backpack or bag.



**Double check the time and location of the exam.**

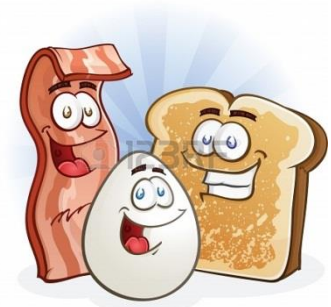
**Set your alarm clock** – Ensure that the alarm is set to a time that will give you adequate time to prepare in the morning. You do not want to feel rushed. If you are concerned about sleeping through the alarm, put it across the room, or set a back-up alarm.



**Get a good night's sleep** – You want to feel fresh and alert during your exam, which means you need rest. Furthermore, we process any information gathered during the day in our sleep and store it to long term memory. Therefore, you will have an easier time accessing information in your memory if you are well rested.

## Exam Day

**Eat a good breakfast** that includes complex carbohydrates and proteins (this will keep you energized and full). ex. Oatmeal and Greek yogurt with berries or eggs and whole grain toast.



**Dress appropriately.** For example, if you know the environment will be cold, wear layers so that you are not distracted by feelings of being too cold.



**Avoid talking to friends or peers before the exam.** If they are feeling panicked and pessimistic, it might make you feel stressed and unprepared, which can negatively affect your performance. Furthermore, people who are panicked might start asking questions that are poorly phrased or that are about unimportant material. If this happens, and you are unsure of how to answer their questions, it might affect your confidence.

## When You Get the Exam

**Read Over the Whole Exam as Soon as You Get it and do the following:**

- 1) **Read all Instructions Carefully** – If you don't read instructions carefully, you might waste time doing more than you need to, or you might make an assumption about what you are supposed to do on a question that is not correct.
- 2) **Read Questions Thoroughly and Highlight Key Question Words** – This way you will be sure what the question is asking and how to respond.
- 3) **Answer the Easiest Questions and the Ones You Know First** – This will help you build confidence.
- 4) **Write down any key formulas or concepts in the margins next to a question to ensure you don't forget it due to nervousness.**

## As You Write Your Exam

**Remember your Exam Plan and Manage Your Time Accordingly** – Judge your time and consider the mark value of each question/section in order to decide how much time you can afford to spend on each question. There's no point spending 15 minutes on a question with a 2 mark value when it means you don't have time to answer the question valued at 10 marks. If you are struggling with a question that is not worth many marks, put a star beside it and come to it later.

**If you are running out of time, write down "jot notes" of any key points.**

**If you don't know the answer, take a guess!**



### Exam Anxiety

A certain amount of nervousness about a test or exam is not only normal, but can also be beneficial because it helps energize us to do our best. These feelings do not necessarily mean that you have anxiety.

**Here are some ways that you can cope with nerves associated with assessments before the exam:**

- 1) Practice positive thinking. While you are studying, avoid statements like "I can't" or "I'm stupid". Replace them with statements like, "I have having difficulty with this, but I have strategies and I will figure it out".
- 2) Take a "mind tour"- Students who can "see" themselves performing well on tests tend to do so. In order to "visualize" your way to success, take a few minutes every night before bed and picture yourself in the exam room, doing well. Remember to use all of your senses and think in detail (ex. Picture the exam room in which the exam will be written, picture where you are sitting, think about what you might be hearing, who will be around you, how the paper feels under your hands etc.)
- 3) Keep reminding yourself that you are being tested on what you know. Remember, it is gratifying to an instructor if you do well, because it makes the instructor feel that he/she has done a good job. They are not out to "get you" or trick you.
- 4) Prepare yourself adequately. The more prepared you feel, the less nervous you will be.
- 5) Don't be fooled by the apparent "confidence" of others. If you are nervous, it is likely that everyone feels nervous. Those who act confident are usually covering up their nerves.
- 6) People often get nervous before exams because they fall victim to a series of negative statements about themselves and their performance (ex. "I am not prepared", "I didn't study the right things", "The person next to me has written more") If you are inclined to such worries, think about them before hand and prepare some realistic answers to help you calm yourself down (ex. "Nobody is ever fully prepared", "I am bound to have covered some of the right things in studying", "I may have written less, but I have said more").

## Exam Anxiety Continued

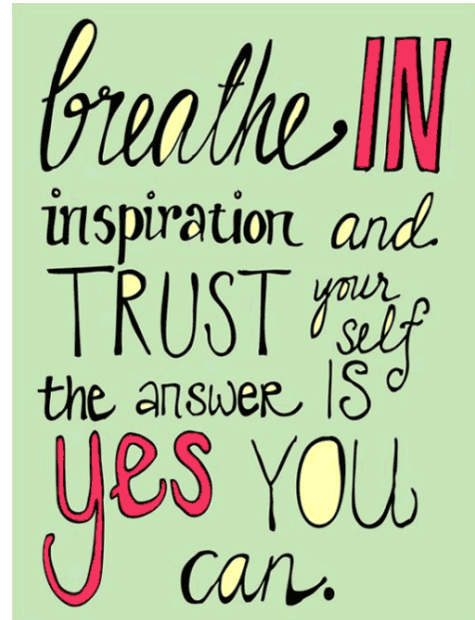
If you feel very nervous during the exam, try these strategies:

### 1) The CO2 Zapper Strategy.

The CO2 Zapper strategy works quickly because of chemistry. Nervousness produces an excess of carbon dioxide in the brain. Unfortunately, carbon dioxide is an anxiety-producing chemical, which creates a vicious cycle. To stop the cycle, practice the following 4 steps:

- 1) Close your eyes.
- 2) Breathe in deeply through your nose.
- 3) Hold your breath for a steady 1-2-3-4 count.
- 4) Exhale slowly through the mouth.
- 5) Repeat 2-4 times in succession for best results.

This technique, regulates the flow of oxygen and absorbs it while excess carbon dioxide is exhaled.



### 2) Fast Calm (or the Box Breathing Strategy)

Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds.

### 3) The Whistle Stopper Strategy

If you feel your mind beginning to spiral with negative thoughts, say "STOP" firmly in your mind (you might even visualize a stop sign), and picture a mental distractor. Your mental distractor should be something pleasant that redirects you to positive thoughts (ex. Your pet, a great vacation you took, the lyrics to a favourite song). You might need to do this more than once during the exam, but it will help you eventually let go of the negative thoughts.



# EXAM STUDY GUIDE

**SUBJECT:**

**TEACHER:**

**EXAM DATE:**

**TIME AND LOCATION OF EXAM:**

**What kind of questions will be asked, and how much is each section worth?**

	<b>Will it be on the Exam (✓)</b>	<b>How Much is This Section Worth?</b>
Multiple Choice	—	—
True/False	—	—
Matching	—	—
Fill in the Blanks	—	—
Short Answer	—	—
Essay	—	—
Diagrams	—	—
Other	—	—

**TOPICS THAT I MUST KNOW: (ranked in importance)**

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 7.  |
| 2. | 8.  |
| 3. | 9.  |
| 4. | 10. |
| 5. | 11. |
| 6. | 12. |

**Previous Assessments From Which I Should Study (ex. Tests, essays, assignments):**

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## Specific Strategies Based on Question Type

### Multiple Choice

- 1) Work through the questions in sequence, but do the easy ones first.
- 2) Put a check next to difficult questions, and come back to them later. **DO NOT LEAVE BLANKS!**
- 3) Highlight key question words as you read each question to ensure you know what it is asking. Do not skim the question and assume you know what it is asking.
- 4) Read the question without looking at the possible answers and see if you can answer it unassisted. If so, it is likely that your answer is correct.
- 5) Cross out the obviously incorrect answers.
- 6) Use information from other questions to see if you can figure out the answer.
- 7) Proofread your answers, changing the answer **ONLY** if you know it is wrong.
- 8) If in doubt, make an educated guess.

### True and False

- a) Know how the answers are scored (are marks taken off for incorrect answers?)
- b) Read statements slowly and carefully.
- c) Try to think of a reason why the statement is true or false.
- d) Watch for definitive words or general words which could make a statement incorrect (eg. "all", "every", "no").

### Matching

- a) Read all of the possible answers before you start writing so that you know your options.
- b) Start with the matches that you know are correct.
- c) Try to answer the rest of the questions by process of elimination.

### Fill in the Blanks

- a) Re-read the statement several times.
- b) Look for context clues within the statement (ex. "a" and "an" are context cues. If the blank comes after the word "an", then it must begin with a vowel).
- c) Look at the verb in the statement. If it is singular, the answer must be singular. If it is plural, the answer must be plural.
- d) If you cannot think of the answer, come back to it at the end of the exam. Often, other questions and answers on the test can trigger your memory or give you a hint.

### Short Answer

- a) Answer in complete sentences.
- b) Begin your answer by restating part of the question. (eg. Q. "Why are roots important to plant?" A. "Roots are important to a plant because...")
- c) Use the marking scheme as a guide to indicate significant ideas that should be indicated in your answer.

## Essay Questions

- a) Read all instructions and questions, highlighting key words.
- b) If you have a choice, decide which question(s) you will answer based on which one you can argue best.
- c) Beside each question, jot down the key points that come to mind.
- d) Budget your time using the marking scheme as a guide.
- e) Do not read the question and start writing the essay right away. Take time to plan! Draw up an outline which includes the following:
  - A thesis statement (using the question asked to formulate the thesis)
  - The number of paragraphs you will be writing
  - Topic sentences for each paragraph
  - Specific examples that support each idea
  - Key vocabulary words that might be relevant
- f) Write neatly on every other line.
- g) Read through once to ensure content is relevant and clear.
- h) Read through a second time to correct spelling and grammar errors.

## Mathematical Questions

1. Write down all important formulas as soon as you can (eg. BEDMAS).
2. Write down important rules in point form.
3. Include all steps in your solution using the marking scheme as a guide. Usually each step is worth marks.
4. Check your answers if time allows (ex. With equations, substitute the value of the variables to make sure the equation balances).
5. When you encounter word problems: read the problem over twice and highlight key question words, draw a sketch, highlight the information given, highlight the information you are required to find, use statements to represent the unknown information (ex. "Let the boy's age be  $x$ ; Let his sister's age be  $x-7$ )
6. Check carefully for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division errors in all your solutions.

**SUCCESS IS NEITHER  
MAGICAL NOR  
MYSTERIOUS. SUCCESS  
IS THE NATURAL  
CONSEQUENCE OF  
CONSISTENTLY  
APPLYING THE BASIC  
FUNDAMENTALS.**

**JIM ROHN**

**Good luck on your exams!**