

Suggestions for Success in Anatomy and Physiology

Often before an exam I get last minute e-mails from anxious students on how to study for the test. I've decided to type up my advice and give it to students way before the test. Take it or recycle it.

Set reasonable expectations. Most students want an A. However not all students have the resources (time, energy, support, awareness and utilization of their learning style) to earn an A. This class is *hard*. Expect to spend *at least 20 daylight* (and focused) hours *outside of lecture and lab* each week.

This is a class, not life or death. Most students want an A to excel to their next level of education. Keep this course in perspective. There are other priorities greater than this course. Do not minimize those priorities in effort to get an A in this course; it is not worth it (in my opinion).

Know your learning style. Read and apply the chapter on study skills of Get ready for A&P (on reserve in HCC library). Read and apply 'Planning study time' (pink handout).

Be prepared. Read the lecture text and laboratory text *before* we review the material in lecture and lab respectively. Often students will walk into lab and say 'what are we doing today?'. That is a clear message to me that they did not read the schedule and read the lab text. Be an interactive reader. Use the SQRRR method:

S: Scan figures, headings, subheadings of text

Q: Question what they are about. Write down your questions in your notes. Save space to answer those questions

R: Read, take notes, and write flash cards. Record vocabulary, define the words in your own words next to the book's definition. Understand sequences of events, concepts, and mechanisms. Keep track of disorders, conditions, and diseases for potential case study questions and/or multiple choice questions.

R: Recite what you have read and learned. Make associations and link new knowledge to previous knowledge. Just memorizing will not work (especially with critical thinking questions).

R: Review. Take sample evaluations, answer concept check questions, and questions at the end of the chapter. Answer these questions as if you are taking a real exam (don't 'cheat' and use your text or notes)

Read the chapter notes before you come to lecture. Write down any questions you may have and ask during lecture time when I ask for questions or during 'down' lab time when I am not lecturing. Students printing out the notes minutes before lecture obviously did not prepare themselves for lecture.

Go with the text. Sometimes there are discrepancies between the lecture text and other resources (lecture notes, lab text, internet, etc.). Ask for me to clarify. If you do not have time for clarification then go with the lecture text as being correct.

Don't throw your money away. You paid for the course and the materials. You might as well use them. Students that leave lab early, do not use their text materials to the fullest extent, or stop attending lectures are not as successful as the students that get their money's worth.

Don't get stuck on certain words. Many students fix themselves on certain words, definitions, or phrases as they memorize material. And then they are thrown off if their memorized words do not always appear. I change the words for two reasons: 1. I am separating the students that just memorize the material from the students that understand the material, and 2. Often on standardized tests multiple authors contribute to the test bank. They use different words. Even on our exams there are three or more authors. Most of the questions are written by me. I also include questions submitted by students as well as questions from the text. So the wording may not always be from my notes or the text. If you want better wording, then write your own potential test questions and submit them before I write the exam; I may use them.

Use Aberdeen Hall facilities during the weekdays and during day hours.

I can guarantee evening access of Aberdeen facilities (computer lab and model room) when I am in Aberdeen Hall (usually Monday and Wednesdays from 6:00pm-10:15pm for the fall semester, Tuesday and Thursdays from 6:00pm-10:15pm for the spring semester, and Tuesday and Thursdays from 4:00pm to 10:00pm the summer session). Any evenings outside of those times can not be guaranteed and security has the right to deny access and use of these facilities to students if no faculty can represent those students. Therefore, I strongly recommend that students use these facilities *during the day* Monday-Friday. Right before laboratory practical time the model room gets crazy and some people become edgy. Be sure to use these facilities way before 'crunch' time.

Ask do not assume. If you are not clear on something ask. You pay my salary so you might as well get your money's worth. If you are too self conscious to ask in front of your peers, then ask me during down time during the lab or e-mail me.

Don't do this alone. Like most professions working with others is a necessity. So is learning. Join and participate routinely in an efficient and focused study group. All laboratory assignments can be completed and submitted by a group effort. Only put the names of the students that contributed to the answers down on the submitted work. Journal summary and extra credit must be completed and submitted as an individual effort. Use the resources at HCC (walk in tutoring, writing center, librarians, supplemental websites, me). Family and friends want to help you too. Have them test you or teach them (the best way of learning is teaching).

Write extra credit questions on materials you still need to master. Extra credit questions must be typed, correctly answered, on test topics, original, interesting, and some should be challenging. Often students write extra credit questions on materials that they are comfortable with. Why not write questions on things you still need to learn. That way you may earn extra credit and learn something too!

There is no study guide. Three reasons for this: 1. students get upset if I have something on the test that was not on the study guide, 2. students get upset if something was on the study guide and not on the test (and they ‘wasted’ their time learning it (I believe learning is never a waste of time)), and 3. I would be retyping the text. I write the exams from my notes, required texts, student questions, and faculty assessment questions. I am big on vocabulary (definition as well as applied usage), mechanisms, sequences, linking anatomical features with physiological functions, conditions, diseases, and disorders, as well as multiple organ system responses and outcomes. Usually anything I write on the board students will probably see it on an evaluation.

Take time to review your exams. Normally we review exams as a laboratory section the next laboratory period after the exam evening. Students learn the most *after* the test than before or during the test. It is a department policy not to let students keep their lecture exams. However, if a student e-mails me and requests to see their old exam then I will bring their exam to the next laboratory period. Students can review their exam under the following conditions: 1. I must be present or in the room, 2. no writing materials or recording devices are near the student at the time of their exam review, and 3. it must be during down time in the lab (when I am not teaching to the group).