

# Emergency Test Preparation: Cramming

*Although cramming is not recommended, this is a structured approach to cramming for an exam.*



Begin with five sheets of paper. Identify five key concepts or topics that will be covered on the test. Put one key concept or thing-to-know on the top of each page. Use only key words or short phrases.

Next write out an explanation, definition, solution, etc., **in your own words**. Do not use the textbook, handouts, or your notes—*it has to be in your own words* for this to work!

Now compare your response with the source material. Edit or re-write your initial description, this time considering how your initial description does or does not compare to the original sources.

After this, go through and number each page of your topics from 1–5 in order of importance, 1 being the most important topic to remember, 5 being the least. This way you can focus on the most important pages if you run low on time.

If you have time and feel confident with your comprehension of the first five concepts, complete this process for two additional concepts. If you need to, reorder the sequence of importance, this time labeling your pages from 1–7.



If you still have time, add two more concepts and reorder the sequence again, from 1–9. Try not to exceed nine concepts in total.

Review the day of the test, but make sure to give yourself some time to relax before taking the test.

*Derived from Miller, George A., The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on our Capacity for Processing Information, (1956) Harvard University. First published in Psychological Review, 63, pp. 81-97.*