



SEARCH

Tween Life

Safety

Health

Technology

Travel

Learning

Citizenship

Family Life

Learning > Homework



Academic Toolbox: Studying for Finals

Source: Alexandra Mayzler

★★★★★ (1 ratings)

☆☆☆☆☆ Rate this article ✉ Send to a friend 🖨 Printable version

It's that time of year again ... the weather is warmer, the flowers are blooming, and the last thing your tween wants to do stay indoors and study for finals. Tempting as it may be to spend the days outside and just "wing" exams, tweens need to remember that the school year isn't quiet over. Final exams test a student's ability to synthesize a year's worth of material and tend to be an important portion of the grade. The art of preparing for these exams is also an important skill for tests in future grades and in college so use the middle school years to get a strong start on your test prep skills. Here's how tweens can tackle finals prep:

- **Make a plan** - before you jump into studying figure out what you need to study and when you'll be studying it. Just like you cannot bake chocolate chip cookies without flour, sugar, butter, eggs, or chocolate chips, you can't study without the right materials. Gather notes, old homework, and old tests into a folder. Based on these materials figure out what information you'll need to review and how much time you'll need to study. In your planner or agenda book carefully map out your study time.
- **Actually, study** - organizing your materials is an important part of the study process, but it won't help the information stick, neither will just reading over your notes. When you've settled down to studying, use active study techniques such as making flashcards and quizzing yourself, writing and solving problems, or writing practice essays. Use study aids such as mnemonic devices, lists, and associations to help memorize and make sense of the test content. If you're feeling stuck on a series of facts, take your favorite song and change the lyrics to the series of steps or events you're trying to remember. When it is time to sit down and take the test, that song will pop into your head!
- **Get help** - if in the process of studying, you're feeling totally stuck, don't give up. Ask a friend or teacher for help. It's difficult to study something that doesn't make sense and you might end up just getting more confused. If you have trouble understanding your teacher's explanations, consider asking another teacher or expert for help.
- **Take a break** - studying is exhausting. Your brain is going to need to take a break from working. Plan on studying in chunks of time - 30 minutes to an hour - and then take an active break. Take 10 - 15minutes away from your work. Go outside, shoot some hoops, or have an energizing snack. When you're feeling refreshed go back to work, just make sure that your study time is focused and not distracted. Work hard and play hard.
- **Practice makes perfect** - if ever there was a cliché more fitting. It is important to practice applying what you've learned because it will help you identify what you know and what you need to review more. Practicing will also be helpful for the test in that, by doing a mock exam, you will calm some of your jitters by going through an almost-real experience. The process of doing a mock test will also give you an opportunity to fine-tune your test skills such as reading questions, working on timing, and checking your work. Get together with a few friends and each create a mock test then switch tests so that you're not taking your own. You'll have great experience in thinking about the content by making the test and good practice by taking your friend's test.

Most importantly, remind your tween that she's almost there. Instead of thinking of finals as the hardest part of the year she can think about it as the clincher to all the work that she's done in the previous months. How rewarding is it to look at a year's worth of material and realize that you're an expert in the field!



Alexandra Mayzler is the Founder and Director of [Thinking Caps Tutoring](#), a comprehensive tutoring company dedicated to developing innovative and individualized approaches to teaching. She participates in the coordination of the New York Dyslexia Association's annual conference, is a curriculum consultant for independent and public schools, and the author of Tutor in a Book, a study skills book to be published in September 2010. Alexandra spends her free time thinking about how to make studying easier, more interesting, and potentially even enjoyable!

ShareThis