WHAT MISTAKES I PROBABLY MAKE?

1. UNTREATED ANXIETY

PROBLEM

If you fear that your mind will go blank while taking an exam, you may be suffering from exam anxiety. It makes harder to remember what you have studied and answer the questions that are in front of you.

SOLUTION

If you have been studying and you know all the study materials, try to relax on the day of the exam. Think positively ("I've learned about it, so I know this information"), remind yourself that feeling anxious is normal. To calm down during the exam, breathe out the air you have in your lungs and then take a deep breath. Repeat this several times.

2. I CRAM FOR EXAMS

PROBLEM

When you are learning by cramming, all you are trying to do is memorize the study material, instead of understanding what it is about.

SOLUTION

Think how something you have learned is connected to previous courses. Ask yourself how to apply this theory in practice. One of the best ways to understand is to teach others: retell a subject you have learned to your friend, roommate or relative. Sometimes knowledge gaps arise while explaining.

3. I HAVE KNOWLEDGE GAPS

PROBLEM

Subjects in the study program are arranged in such a way that you only understand new information after you have mastered the knowledge of previous courses. If you have these gaps, new things might seem hard to understand.

SOLUTION

Find out what is necessary to understand in the current course. Ask yourself which things that you have studied before, are related to this course? If you have low grades from a course, go back to it and review your notes. If it is too difficult to do it on your own, you can always contact a lecturer or other students to help correct the gaps.

4. I PULL ALL-NIGHTERS

PROBLEM

You keep getting ready for the exam the last night, instead of learning a little bit each day. The information that you remember goes to short-term memory, which is not enough to remember what you have read, the next morning during the exam.

SOLUTION

During sleep, the material from short-term memory moves to long-term memory, so having good night's sleep before an exam is much more efficient than staying up late. Plan ahead and start studying at least 3 days before the exam. Repeat what you have learned every day and make sure you sleep 7–8 hours before the exam.

5. I ONLY STUDY BEFORE EXAM

PROBLEM

You procrastinate and do not leave yourself enough time to study all your material before an exam.

SOLUTION

When you're planning how long it will take to learn a subject or complete a task, reserve 25–30% of time for "unforeseen events." Learn complicated courses in a consistent way: read the notes before and after the lecture, solve all the tasks presented by the lecturer, and make sure to get answers to all the questions you encounter, to avoid creating gaps. This kind of learning will not only help you keep the information you have read for a longer time, but it will also shorten the learning time before the exam.

6. I STUDY WITHOUT BREAKS

PROBLEM

You study for hours without breaks. Unfortunately, long hours of learning do not help to understand better.

SOLUTION

Take breaks between the learning sessions. "Pomodoro" technique can help you with that. Take short breaks every 25–30 minutes (use open source apps for your phone and PC). Try to change the subjects: for example, learn philosophy for one hour and solve the task of mathematics for another hour. That is how you will let your brain rest and keep your productivity level.

7. I DON'T HAVE A STUDY PLAN

PROBLEM

You do not have a learning plan to guide you through your sessions, which makes it difficult to concentrate and choose which part of your studies you need to pay attention to.

SOLUTION

Before a new week, take 15–20 minutes to plan what things to repeat and what work you will need to do in the coming week. Then distribute them to the learning sessions. This will help you see the progress in learning and avoid wasting your energy thinking about where to start.

8. I STUDY THE WRONG THINGS

PROBLEM

Your learning sessions are well planned and divided, but when you go to take an exam, you see questions that you have not included in your notes.

SOLUTION

Start taking notes in a more organized way. Pay attention to what the lecturer emphasizes during the lecture (especially if it is repeated!). Mark it in your notes so you can get back to it. Before you get ready for an exam, read the course description and find the topics you need to learn during the course. It will help you to check if you have included everything in your learning plan.