

# Academic: Take-Home Tests

## What's a take-home test or exam?

You usually have several days to complete a take-home test. This is different from traditional in-person exams, where you usually have a few hours to complete it in an exam room. Typically, take-home tests are in essay format, and you're required to recall and apply information from the entire course. Here are some tips to help you study and successfully complete your next take-home test.

## Studying

Organize your notes.

- Read every question carefully, and make sure you understand it before you answer. It's easy to lose marks by misreading questions. Understand the difference between analyzing, examining, explaining, arguing and so-on.
- Review the syllabus for themes. Review course materials for key concepts.
- Focus on your original thoughts, evidence and citation.
- Use graphic organizers such as tables, mind maps or post-it notes to find connections between ideas and help you recall information.
- Organize your notes. Use graphic organizers, make connections and use sticky-notes for page references.

## Writing the test

- Use an outline to set out your main arguments and evidence.
- Keep your paragraphs organized. Each paragraph should include:
  - A topic sentence that introduces your point
  - Information that develops your thesis
  - Evidence to support your original thoughts
  - Connections between ideas
- Write clearly and directly. Use simple, effective terms. Avoid unnecessary or complicated language.
- Cite your sources according to your professor's instructions.
- Revise your exam. Focus on higher-order concerns (thesis, organization) first. Then, focus on lower-order concerns (spelling and grammar).

## Remember, academic integrity is important.

- Follow your instructor's guidelines for the test or exam.
- [Learn more about academic integrity at McMaster.](#)

**Good luck!**

