Exam Autopsy

Doing an “Exam Autopsy” can be a great way to help you understand why you missed questions and make adjustments for future exams. Fill out the questions and #’s that you missed on the exam. Place a check in each column that best describes the reason you answered incorrectly. Add up the total number of checks in each column to determine the factors that most affected you. Then review for possible solutions. The back side of this page will help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Items Missed:</th>
<th>Test Item Missed</th>
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**Insufficient Information**
- I did not read the textbook thoroughly.
- The information was not in my notes.
- I studied the information but could not remember it.
- I knew the main ideas but needed the details.
- I knew the information but couldn’t apply it.
- I studied the wrong information.

**Test Anxiety**
- Missed or did not understand the vocabulary/terms.
- Answer did not match the essay directive/key word.
- Experienced mental block.
- I was tired during the test and couldn’t concentrate.
- I was hungry during the test and couldn’t concentrate.
- I panicked during the test.

**Careless Mistakes**
- I made careless mistakes—I knew the correct answer.
- I changed a correct answer to a wrong one.
- I misread the directions.
- I misread or misunderstood the question.
- I wrote an incomplete response.

**Lack of Test Wisdom**
- I did not notice a double-negative statement.
- I did not eliminate obviously incorrect choices.
- I did not choose the best answer choice.
- I did not notice limiting words.
- I made poor use of the time provided for the test.
- I ran out of time/did not budget my time appropriately.

**Other**

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How do I use this information?

Look at where you had the most difficulty from the Exam Autopsy Worksheet. Were most of your missed questions because of insufficient information? Or were they a result of careless mistakes?

Identifying where you struggle the most can help to pinpoint specific tactics for you to use either in preparation for or during the test. Based on where you struggle the most according to the worksheet, try some of the following approaches to improve before your next exam.

**Insufficient Information or Lack of Test Wisdom**
- Attend tutoring, mentoring sessions, and/or study groups.
- Keep up with the material-falling behind can make you feel overwhelmed and even less motivated.
- Clarify concepts by asking questions during lecture and participating in class discussions.
- Visit the professor’s office hours.
- Other handouts to look at: Note Taking, Becoming a Better Listener, 12 Principles of Memory, Goal Setting for Studying.

**Test Anxiety or Careless Mistakes**
- Underline key words in questions so you can keep track of important information and direction.
- Skip difficult questions and return to them later—your brain may need more thinking time to process.
- Ask for help during the exam for clarification.
- Other handouts to look at: Essay Exam Strategies, The Study Cycle, Learning Styles, Objective Test Strategies, 12 Essential Test Taking Skills

It is also important to understand what your behavior before and during the test were. Understanding these will give you a better sense of why you performed on the test as you did and how you can adjust to do better in the future. Go through both checklists and then go over them with your Success Coach.

**Check what you did before the exam:**
- Read and highlight the textbook.
- Combine notes from the text with lecture notes.
- Prepared a test study guide or flashcards.
- Studied with other students from class.
- Got assistance from the TA or professor.
- Got enough sleep the night before.
- Previewed the assigned reading before class.
- Attended all lectures.
- Reviewed previous notes before the next lecture.
- Attended SI sessions or tutoring.

**Check what you did during the exam:**
- Glance through exam before doing any work.
- Read the instructions carefully.
- Complete the easiest questions first.
- Ask for clarification of unclear questions.
- Underlined key words in questions.
- Outlined my answers to essay questions.
- Became so anxious it affected my performance.
- Budgeted my time based on question weight.
- Did the exam questions in order.
- Skipped hard questions and returned later.

Adapted from: “Exam Autopsy” www.csufresno.edu/supportnet

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