

FINALS tips

-Make sure you eat during finals
-If you're unsure, always ask

-Do what you can to help yourself focus while taking your finals

-Triple check that your alarm is set if you have to get up early for an exam

-Heed time warnings during exams and always be realistic about when you can finish

-Check the finals week schedule carefully

EVENTS

- Graduate Pizza Party: 11:30 a.m. Dec. 9 in the SUB Georgian Rooms
- 23rd Annual Box Fort Competition: 7 p.m. Dec. 8 in Kirk Gym
- Look for other stress relieving events in the residence halls

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Finals week.

These two, simple words strike fear into the hearts of students. Whether it's your first or your last, there's something unpleasant, scary and daunting about the last week of the semester at Truman State, but there doesn't have to be.

Personally, I've had a strong aversion to finals week because of an exceptionally bad first experience and a couple of honest mistakes on my part.

It all started when my alarm didn't go off.

I can't explain it. For some reason our alarm clocks, phones, watches and iPods seem to turn on us the moment we need them most. I opened my eyes to see light streaming through the blinds, rolled over to face my alarm clock and nearly fell out of my lofted bed when I saw the time. I was almost late to my final ... in Barnett Hall. After donning the first pair of pants I could find, I was out the door, and I reached the classroom just in time to review a few notes before the test. First lesson — double and triple check that your alarm is set if you have to get up early for an exam. In fact, it's safest to set multiple alarms and, just to be safe, ask your roommate to make sure you're up by a certain time.

I thought perhaps I was out of the woods, but time continued to get the best of me throughout the week. That night, I was hard at work in my dorm room studying for my two finals the next day. I didn't have a roommate at the time, so I had not spoken to another human being for hours. It turns out I studied right through dinner, late into the evening, and without consulting my watch I stumbled out into the south side of Missouri Hall's first floor to see people crowding the dining hall. In a panic, I ran into my lounge disoriented because I thought perhaps it was morning and I had studied all night. Turns out it was actually the late night exam treats, a delicious alternative to my nonexistent dinner, but for about five solid minutes my internal clock was completely out of sorts. Second lesson — make sure you eat during finals. Stock up on snacks and easy dinners, and take advantage of exam treats. It's a great study break, and an opportunity to pull your nose out of your books and get some air.

Then came Tuesday. I woke up on time — thanks to my properly set alarm — and continued studying until it was time to head out for my second final in Barnett. I arrived a little early, feeling much more confident. As the exam time approached, I was worried by the few students filing into the room, none of whom looked familiar. I was part of a relatively large class and knew many of the other students.

When I asked the girl next to me, I nearly jumped out of my seat — I was in a nursing final. In the hallway I ran into a girl from my class and frantically asked her which room our final was in. She looked at me quizzically and pointed to the room I'd just come from. When I continued to express my distress, she added "and it's not until 1:30." I had showed up for the test at 9:30 a.m. Third lesson — check the finals week schedule carefully. If you're not sure when a final is, check with your class' syllabus or professor.

After completing my first final of the day and squeezing in a bit more studying, I arrived at Baldwin Hall for my Spanish exam. It turned out True Men was having a concert that night as well — during my exam. So while I was up to my eyeballs in subjunctive verb conjugations, the harmonious sounds of male voices singing a capella wafted in from Baldwin Auditorium across the hall. Fourth lesson — you might not always have a perfect atmosphere for concentrating, so do what you can to help yourself focus. Now, I always take a bottle of water, a jacket and gum with me to a test. The water gives me something to do when I need to give my hand or mind a break, and the jacket ensures temperature won't be an issue. The gum is pleasant, keeps me moving and helps my mind focus on the task at hand. There's not much you can do about a fabulous concert happening across the hall, but you can take steps to counter what you recognize as problem areas when testing and staying concentrated.

Finally, Thursday rolled around and it was time for my last final. I had not studied much because there was a paper due for the same class that day. I was also unsure of exactly what would be on the test and let that uncertainty go unaddressed during the weeks leading up to the exam. Fifth lesson — if you're unsure, always ask. You'll learn even more about the material and how well you're absorbing it by meeting with your professor.

My last lesson comes from the final moments of that same exam. The last component for this exam was a full essay. I was scribbling furiously, trying to get it all down when the proctor gave me a warning. Instead of tying up the sentence I was working on and doing my best to end it there, I charged on, sure that I could get it all in during my remaining two minutes. Turns out I could not. It ended with the proctor ordering me to put my pencil down and me turning in an essay that concluded with an incomplete sentence. Sixth lesson — heed those time warnings and be realistic about what you can finish, then let it go. An imperfect essay on a test is not the end of the world.

In closing, I'd like to leave you with this — finals week will be fine. It's just five days, and even if they are some of the worst days of your life — believe me, I would know — you'll get through it. You can sleep until 1 p.m. and watch Netflix on Saturday. Work hard while it still counts.