

# CPSC 351 — Preparing Notes as a Test Aid

Like many other things, notes that you are allowed to bring into a test can either be something that improves your performance (and grade) — or significantly *impairs* your performance and *lowers* your grade.<sup>1</sup>

## Suggested Things to Do

- Use this to **supplement** the other things to do for a test, instead of replacing them. In this course you should be attending lectures and tutorials.<sup>2</sup> You should be completing as many practice problems as you can — while making note of the course material that you need to use to *solve* these problems.

As you are doing this you can use your allowed “notes for the test” to record significant definitions, technical results, and stages in recommended processes that you have difficulty remembering.

- Read the supplied “About the Test” document, if you have not already done so. Some students don’t do this and then (somehow) end up preparing for the wrong test. This will help you to have the “big picture”, of what is required, that you need to start.
- Review the problems that are solved in lecture presentations and tutorial exercises. Have you overlooked anything that you might be asked to do, to solve a problem on a test, where you might need a memory aid?
- Review the “key concepts” documents for the lectures. You will not have room to list all the definitions and results that are summarized in these documents — but these can also help you to make sure that you have considered as much of the information, that you might need to do, as possible.
- Don’t leave this too late! As with many other things, preparing an aid for a test will probably take more time than you expect — especially if you have not done this before.

---

<sup>1</sup>Initial studies suggest that AI tools like chatGPT are also like this.

<sup>2</sup>Even though one-half of you do not seem to believe me, you chose to lower your grade in this course, when you chose not to attend these meetings. Some of you just aren’t admitting it.

## Thing Not to Do

- Don't make additional assumptions about what will be asked on a test or what won't be — even when a “practice test” seems to support your assumptions. Cutting out a significant amount of material because you are assuming too much, about what will be covered, can result in a situation where *none* of the material that you have included in your notes is useful. Of course, it can also result in situations where you cannot answer any questions on the test, at all.
- Don't assume that very many test questions can be answered just by stating definitions, or statements of technical results, from class: This is not that kind of course. It won't be sufficient to have these things written down, so that you can write them down on a test paper: You will also need to know how to *use* these things to solve problems!
- Don't write out the instructor's solutions for practice problems with the expectation that you will be able to receive any marks on the test — at all — by including this material in order to answer a question on a test without change, or with minor modifications to the material. The kinds of problems that you are learning how to solve, in a course like this, are *much* too varied for this to be a successful technique.

When you do this, you are actually suggesting to a marker that you **do not** understand what you are being asked to do: Otherwise you would have focussed on the descriptions of the processes that you are being asked to follow, when solving nontrivial problems, and showing that you are trying to apply them.

In general, you are just “wasting space” when you include the solutions for practice problems in notes that you are being allowed to use as an aid during a test.