

### Discussion Assignment: Distributing Study Time

It's Monday. You have an exam on Friday on four chapters. What is your study plan?		
<u>Plan A</u> Methodical Approach	<u>Plan B</u> Cramming Approach	<u>Plan C</u> Spacing, Interleaving & Retrieval Approach
<b>Monday:</b> Read Ch. 1	<b>Monday:</b> Do other stuff	<b>Monday:</b> Read Ch. 1 & 2 (at least)
<b>Tuesday:</b> Read Ch. 2	<b>Tuesday:</b> Do other stuff	<b>Tuesday:</b> Test self on Ch. 1 & 2; Read Ch. 3 & 4
<b>Wednesday:</b> Read Ch. 3	<b>Wednesday:</b> Start Reading	<b>Wednesday:</b> Test self on Ch. 3 & 4; Review Ch. 1 & 2 based on self-test
<b>Thursday:</b> Read Ch. 4 and review all chapters	<b>Thursday:</b> Finish Reading and Review	<b>Thursday:</b> Review Ch. 3 & 4 based on self-test; Review and self-test all chapters
<b>Friday:</b> Take Exam	<b>Friday:</b> Take Exam	<b>Friday:</b> Take Exam

#### Discussion Questions

1. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of each plan?
2. Which of these plans do you think would be most effective and least effective for learning? Explain your reasoning.
3. Which plan do you think you should follow? Which plan do you think you would likely follow (or what plan of your own would you follow)? Explain your choices.

### Instructor Discussion Guide for “Distributing Study Time” Activity (for instructor use)

**Plan A** represents a methodical approach to studying. Every chapter is read once. Students may see this as a good study plan because it is thorough, but reading a chapter only once is not sufficient for learning new, complex concepts. There is no mechanism for feedback about proper understanding (metacognition) or misconceptions. In addition, chapters read early in the week are likely to be forgotten by the exam. Students need to have an opportunity to read the chapter, reflect on it, get answers to any questions about it, get feedback about their understanding and review the material. Although comprehensive, this is not a good study plan for long-term learning.

**Plan B** represents cramming, concentrating study time immediately before the exam. While cramming can be an effective study strategy for immediate recall, it is a poor study strategy for long-term recall because forgetting is rapid from massed studying. It is also a highly risky and stressful strategy. If it turns out that the material is more complex than the student anticipates, there is no additional time that the student can allocate for studying. If the student cannot grasp the material quickly or has questions, there is no opportunity to get help. If the student has misconceptions from the reading, there is no way to discover these before the exam. Students, especially struggling students and those who are aiming just to pass the exam may, may easily fail the exam using this strategy.

**Plan C** requires the most effort to carry out but will lead to the most enduring learning and gives the student the best chance of developing a deep, accurate understanding of the material. By reading, self-testing, then reviewing, students have a chance to reflect on the material, discover gaps and misconceptions, formulate questions and get answers to those questions. This plan incorporates spacing, interleaving and retrieval practice, all highly effective long-term learning strategies. This method requires more planning and self-discipline than the other plans but it is less stressful than cramming at the last minute and being uncertain about one’s level of understanding.