Exam Study Strategies Summary
April 2018

After Exam 1, students in Psy 101-01 and Psy/Nsc 204 completed the survey on study strategies. From those responses, I identified 10 strategies that were commonly used by students who did well on the first exam (who scored at least one standard deviation above the class mean – a z-score of +1 or larger), and we discussed the benefits of using these strategies to prepare for later exams in each course. After our most recent exam (Exam 2 in Psy 101, and Exam 4 in Psy/Nsc 204), students completed the survey a second time. Each strategy was rated on a 5 point scale (1 = never used, 5 = used very often).

For the 9 strategies identified from Exam 1, the average rating on our latest exam (M = 4.0, SD = 0.4) was similar to Exam 1 (M = 4.0, SD = 0.5). For the other 10 strategies, the averages were also lower both on our latest exam (M = 3.5, SD = 0.4) and Exam 1 (M = 3.3, SD = 0.5).

Importantly, for those who completed both surveys, the change in their use of the 9 suggested strategies was significantly higher for students who did poorly on Exam 1 (M = +0.11, SD = 0.03) compared to students who did well on Exam 1 (M = -0.31, SD = 0.03). For the other 10 strategies (which were not recommended), there was little or no change for the students who did poorly on Exam 1 (M = +0.03, SD = 0.02) or those who did well on Exam 1 (M = -0.19, SD = 0.02). While not significant, individuals who increased in their use of the 9 suggested strategies also showed a larger improvement on Exam 2 compared to Exam 1 (r = +0.15).

After examining the first exam and most recent exam, I revised the list of recommended strategies to select 11 that were reported by students who did well (z-score ≥ +1) on either Exam 1 or on our latest exam (see the table below). In the table, the means are given for each strategy (for students with a z-score ≥ +1), and the numbers in bold indicate questions where the mean was significantly higher for participants who did well on each exam compared to those with a low z-score.

Notably, several strategies that were used commonly on Exam 1 dropped on our most recent exam. In general, these tended to be the more _time-intensive strategies_ (shown in _italics_ below). These strategies were _positively correlated with grades_ on Exam 1 (and should be **_worth emphasizing_** as you prepare for finals!).

Study Strategies	Exam 1	Latest Exam
When I'm uncertain about the answer to an assignment question, I look up the information I need to answer the question.	4.7	4.3
I arrange my studying environment so I can learn more effectively (for example, I move to a quiet place or have background noise).	4.6	4.3
I read over past exams.	**4.6**	4.0
I review the textbook readings and/or PDF readings.	**4.4**	**4.4**
I take notes in class or when I study, and I mark what I don't understand.	4.4	4.2
I evaluate the quality or progress of my work. For example, I check over my assigned work to make sure I did it right; when I get an answer wrong, I try to understand why the correct answer is right.	**4.3**	3.6
I reread my notes.	4.2	**4.4**
I practice answering previous years' exams.	4.2	3.7
I write out answers for questions on exams from past years and/or the reading response questions on Canvas.	**4.2**	3.0
When I study, I rearrange and organize the information to improve my learning (by making outlines, diagrams, summaries, etc.).	**4.1**	3.2
I review my previous assignments (homework, reading responses, quizzes) critically (meaning, in an effort to understand the correct answer and/or explanation).	3.9	4.0