

## How Do I Use Past Exams?

There is a lot to learn from returned exams. Looking over past exams you can:

- **Understand** how professor writes exam questions - if you are clear on what and how your professor asks questions will make it easier (and faster!) to interpret them on your next exam.
- **Clarify** what level of detail you are expected to know
- **Identify** knowledge areas. How is the information grouped on the exam? Are there areas you didn't know? What areas do you need to concentrate on?
- **Know** which questions you missed and why. Were they careless errors? Did you misinterpret a question? Was there an area of information you didn't study?

You can also use past exams to help you prepare for future exams. Here are a few strategies for this:

- **Review** all questions and answers that you answered correctly.
- **Circle** or **highlight** all keywords and phrases for questions or problems answered incorrectly

Ask yourself:

***"What do I need to know  
to answer this question?"***

Write your answers down. Try the questions or problem again. If you are still having difficulty answer the question or problem, use your resources to figure out what you need to know:

- **Ask** friends, your TA, tutor
- **Review** the relevant material in your notes, textbook, lecture slides
- **Use** questions and problems from previous exams and quizzes to create your own practice exam by choosing random questions and/or problems from your textbook, or make up questions based on your notes and other material.

Practice exams should be used throughout your study process - not just at the end! They are helpful to:

- **Assess** and identify areas where you need to really focus your studying
- **Applying** knowledge in the same way you will be asked to do on the final exam
- **Practice** completing exam material with a time limit

