

Disclaimer: These are the strategies that have worked best for me. Other people will successfully use different strategies, but I think many students will find these tips useful.

1. The most important factor in your readiness to take an actuarial exam is the number of hours you have studied. The most surefire way to fail an actuarial exam is by not studying enough. The standard recommendation is to study 100 hours for every hour of the actual exam. This means a 3 hour exam carries a recommendation of 300 study hours.
2. Because the number of hours you study is so important, you should keep track of the number of hours you have studied (a rough estimate is fine). This helps you know if you are on pace to reach the recommended number of study hours.
3. For the preliminary exams, there are some study materials that are offered for free. Search for your exam on [soa.org](http://soa.org), and you will at the very least find some sample questions and solutions for your exam. While you are on [soa.org](http://soa.org), be sure to download the syllabus for your exam so you know what topics are being covered, and at what depth. Dr. Marcel B. Finan has created free study manuals for each of the preliminary exams. I have not used his study manuals, so unfortunately I cannot vouch for their quality.
4. Study efficiently. Don't spend too much time on any one section in the manual, or on any one problem. Do make sure that you understand the concepts of a section and how to do the simpler problems before moving on to the next section.
5. You will need to find a way to memorize a lot of formulas. I make flashcards and study them at least once a week during the practice exam stage of my studying.
6. You should start taking practice exams at least one month before your exam. Many study manuals have practice exams, but you can purchase practice exams from other sources as well. Coaching Actuaries ADAPT is a product that provides electronic practice exams that I have used for Exam FM and Exam MFE, and I found it very helpful for those exams.
7. Log on to actuarial outpost ([http://www.actuarialoutpost.com/actuarial\\_discussion\\_forum/forumdisplay.php?f=43](http://www.actuarialoutpost.com/actuarial_discussion_forum/forumdisplay.php?f=43)) and check the progress of your fellow exam takers. This gives you a measuring stick of how your studying is going compared to others, and you may find information that will help you in your studies.