

The Weeder Survival Checklist

The first 48 hours and the first two weeks, in triage order. Print it. Check it off.

Day 0 — today

30 MIN

- ☐ **Every exam date into your calendar now** — from the syllabus, not from memory.
- ☐ **Bookmark the course's public past-exam archive** (department or official course site).
- ☐ **Install Anki** (apps.ankiweb.net) — free; the web version works on any machine.
- ☐ **Skim the last exam's structure only** — question count, types, point economy. Not content yet.
- ☐ **Pick your weekly planning slot** — 10 minutes, same day each week, non-negotiable.

Week 1 — build the loop

25 MIN/DAY

- ☐ **After each lecture: close the notes** and write what you remember, 5 minutes. The gaps are tonight's list.
- ☐ **End of day: 10 retrieval cards** on today's material — your deck or self-made.
- ☐ **Office hours with one specific stuck point** — never "I'm lost," always "here's where my derivation breaks."
- ☐ **Read problem solutions with a pen:** reproduce each step before moving on.

Week 2 — make it exam-shaped

STILL 25 MIN/DAY

- ☐ **One old exam question, closed-book, timed** — attempt before reading anything.
- ☐ **Self-grade against the posted solution, harshly.** The gap is the study list.
- ☐ **Start the error log:** one line per miss — what I assumed vs. what was true.
- ☐ **Space the repeats:** today's cards again tomorrow, in 3 days, in 7.

The daily loop, compressed

KEEP FOREVER

- ☐ **Retrieve before you review.** Memory first, notes second — always in that order.
- ☐ **Explain one idea out loud** as if teaching it. Where you stall is what you don't know.
- ☐ **Cards in the gaps:** bus, queue, before class. Ten minutes, spread out, beats one block.
- ☐ **One practice problem daily** from week 2 onward — exam-shaped, not lecture-shaped.

The four rules that carry the semester

- ☐ **Retrieval beats rereading.** Reading feels like studying; recall *is* studying.
- ☐ **Never re-watch a lecture you can't summarize from memory** — summarize first, patch gaps after.
- ☐ **Sleep is part of the plan.** A rested retrieval session beats a 2 a.m. cram, every time.
- ☐ **Stuck 15+ minutes?** Write the exact stuck point and take it to office hours. Struggle is the work; drowning isn't.