

Ten Tips for Test Taking

- **Come prepared; arrive early for tests.** Bring all the materials you will need such as pencils and pens, a calculator, and a watch. This will help you focus on the task at hand;
- **Stay relaxed and confident.** Don't let yourself become *anxious*. Don't talk to other students before a test; anxiety is contagious. Instead, remind yourself that you are well-prepared and are going to do well. If you feel anxious before or during a test, take several slow, deep breaths to relax;
- **Be comfortable but alert.** If allowed a choice, choose a good spot to take the test. Make sure you have enough room to work. Maintain an upright posture in your seat.
- **Preview the test.** (if it is not timed)
Spend 10% of your test time reading through the test carefully, marking key terms and deciding how to budget your time. Plan to do the easy questions first and the most difficult questions last. As you read the questions, jot down brief notes indicating ideas you can use later in your answers;
- **Answer the test questions in a strategic order.** Begin by answering the easy questions you know, then those with the highest point value. The last questions you answer should be those that are the most difficult, take the greatest amount of writing, or have the least point value.
- **When taking a multiple choice test, know when to guess.** First eliminate answers you know are wrong. Always guess when there is no penalty for guessing or you can eliminate options. Don't guess if you have no basis for your choice and if you are penalized for guessing. Since your first choice is usually correct, don't change your answers unless you are sure of the correction.
- **When taking essay tests, think before you write.** Create a brief outline for your essay by jotting down a few words to indicate ideas you want to discuss. Then number the items in your list to indicate the order in which you will discuss them;
- **When taking essay test, get right to the point.** State your main point in the first sentence. Use your first paragraph to provide an overview of your essay. Use the rest of your essay to discuss these points in more detail. Back up your points with specific information, examples, or quotations from your readings and notes.
- **Reserve 10% of your test time for review.** Review your test; resist the urge to leave as soon as you have completed. Make sure you have answered all the questions. Proofread your writing for spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Check your math answers for careless mistakes (e.g. misplaced decimals).
- **Analyze your test results.** Each test can further prepare you for the next test. Decide which strategies worked best for you. Identify those that didn't work well and replace them. Use your tests to review when studying for final exams.

Dealing with Test Anxiety

Before the test:

- **Be prepared!** Learn your material thoroughly;
- **Approach the exam with confidence.**
View the exam as an opportunity to show how much you've studied and to receive a reward for the studying you've done.
- **Get a good night's sleep the night before the exam.**
- **Allow yourself plenty of time,** especially to do things you need to do before the test and still get there a little early .
- **Relax just before the exam.**
- **Don't try to do a last minute review.**
- **Don't go to the exam with an empty stomach.**
- **Take a piece of candy, or some other nourishment** to help take your mind off of your anxiety.

During the test:

- **Read the directions carefully.**
- **Budget your test taking time.**
- **Change positions to help you relax.**
- **If you go blank, skip the question and go on.**
- **If you're taking an essay test** and you go blank on the whole test, pick a question and start writing. It may trigger the answer in your mind.
- **Don't panic** when students start handing in their papers. There's no reward for being the first done.

Multiple Choice Tests

- Read the directions carefully.
- Know whether you must mark the one best correct answer or all correct answers.
- Know if you are penalized for guessing. Find out if an incorrect answer will cost you more points than a blank answer.
- Read the stem of the question all the way through, then each possible answer all the way through.
- Use the options themselves to provide you with hints about things you need to know.
- If you are uncertain of the correct answer, cross out the options you know are definitely wrong, then mark the question so that you can reconsider it at the end of the exam.
- Circle all negative words and 100% words (all, never, every, ...) within the question stem and options.
- "All of the above" answers are often correct. If you know two of three of options are correct, "all of the above" is a strong possibility.
- If you're not sure about a number answer, toss out the high and low and consider the middle range numbers.
- If you have no idea of the answer, check for "look alike" options.
- If you have no idea of the answer, check for the most inclusive option--the option that contains the most information.

Adapted from Walter Pauk's *How to Study In College*.

True/False Tests

- Most true/false tests contain more true answers than false answers. When in doubt, guess true. Your chance of being right is greater than 50%.
- Pay close attention to qualifiers, negatives, and long strings of statements.
- Qualifiers are words that restrict or open up general statements. Words like "no, never, none, always, every, entirely, only" restrict possibilities and usually imply false statements. They imply a statement must be true 100% of the time.
- Qualifiers like "sometimes, often, frequently, ordinarily, generally" open up the possibilities of making accurate statements and usually indicate true answers. They make more modest claims that are more likely to reflect reality.
- Negatives are confusing. If the question contains negatives, like "no, not, cannot," circle the negative and read the sentence that remains. Decide whether that sentence is true or false. If it is true, the opposite or negative is usually false.
- Every part of a true sentence must be true. If any one part of the sentence is false, the whole sentence is false despite many other true statements. Therefore, read long sentences carefully and pay attention to each group of words set off by punctuation. Sentences with long strings of words are most likely-- but not always--false statements.

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Essay Exams

Essay exams test how students think about materials and relate ideas. Correct information is important, but the presentation and logic of that information is also.

- **Begin by jotting down information on the back of your question or scratch paper.** Write down quotations, specific points or examples you don't want to forget.
- **Read all test questions carefully before you begin writing.** Note if you have any choice about which questions you can answer. Always answer the questions for which you are best prepared. Estimate how much time to allow for each question.
- **Mark up each question you choose.** Jot down key phrases and terms to indicate ideas you associate with the question in the margin next to it. Circle the key words that instruct you how to approach the question. Number and answer all parts of each question.
- **Make a brief outline for your answer.** Write down a few words to indicate the ideas that come into your head, then pick the best. Number those in the most logical order for discussion. Check your outline against the question. Stick to facts; avoid opinions.
- **Begin your essay with a strong first sentence that states the main idea of your essay.** Your first paragraph presents a plan for the rest of the answer by presenting all of your key points. Later on, develop each point in a complete paragraph.
- **Emphasize the key points of your answer.** Use your key points to begin paragraphs. Don't discuss more than one key point in a paragraph. Use transitions or enumerate to connect your points.
- **End your essay with a strong conclusion.** Restate your central idea and indicate why it is important. Proofread your paper for spelling, punctuation and to be sure your ideas read smoothly. If you did not have time to finish, outline your answer.

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