

Test Taking Strategies

Organizing for Tests

- Begin reviewing early. This will give your brain time to get comfortable with the information.
- Conduct short daily review sessions. You can ease into more intense review sessions prior to major exams.
- Review with a group. This will enable you to cover important material that you may overlook on your own.
- Conduct a major review early enough. Allow for a visit to the instructor if necessary.
- Study the most difficult material when you're alert.
- Don't just cram the night before an exam.
- Get plenty of sleep the night before an exam.
- Don't go to the exam with an empty stomach. Eat healthy food.
- If you need help in a subject area, consider getting a tutor.

Anticipating Test Content

- Pay particular attention to any study guides that the instructor hands out in class.
- Pay particular attention just prior to the exam to points the instructor brings up during class lectures.
- Generate a list of possible questions you would ask if you were making the exam, then see if you can answer the questions.
- Review previous tests graded by the instructor.
- Confer with other students to predict what will be on the test.

Guidelines for Multiple Choice Questions

- Eliminate options you know to be incorrect.
- Cover up the answers – read and answer the main question then review your choices
- Give each option of a question the “true-false” test.
- Question options that grammatically don't fit with the stem.
- Question options that are totally unfamiliar to you.
- Question options that contain negative or absolute words. Try substituting a qualified term for the absolute one, like *frequently* for *always*; or *typical* for *every* to see if you can eliminate it.
- “All of the Above”: If you know two of the three options seem correct, “all of the above” is usually a strong possibility.
- Look alike options: Probably one is correct. Choose the best, but eliminate choices that mean basically the same thing and thus cancel each other out.
- Double negatives: Create the equivalent positive statement and consider.
- Echo options: If two options are opposite each other, chance are one of them is correct.
- Favor options that contain qualifiers. The result is longer, more inclusive items that better fill the role of the answer.
- If two alternatives seem correct: Compare them for differences, then refer to the stem to find you best answer.

Guidelines for Essay Questions

- Organize your thoughts before you begin to write. A short outline will improve your answer. Write the topics and key introductory words.

- It can be helpful to memory “dump” any information you have at the beginning of the exam.
- Paraphrase the original question to form your introductory statement. The process helps you get the question straight in your mind.
- Use the principles of English composition. Form a clear thesis statement (statement of purpose) and place it as near to the beginning as possible.
- Write clearly! Teachers need to be able to read it.
- Use lists or bullets wherever possible. Numbers or bullets allow teachers to easily see your points.
- Identify the verbs or words in the question that give you direction. Key words in each question describe the task you are expected to complete.

Test Anxiety

Additional tips

- Ask the professor for clarification if necessary.
- Don't focus on others during the exam. Focus on the exam.
- Keep breathing, as deeply and calmly as possible.
- Take a moment to tense and relax your muscles, then go back to the test.
- Break your pencil lead, and go sharpen it, or go get a drink or to the restroom if you need to move around.
- Close your eyes and talk to yourself as you would to your best friend in this situation.

If you feel overwhelmed

- Pause, take some cleansing breaths, tighten and release some muscles and take a moment to relax your body.
- Expect your fear to rise some as you address the test; remind yourself this is normal.
- Work to talk yourself out of the incapacitating parts of your fear. Remind yourself it is simply anxiety, others are experiencing it, it is not the end of the world and you can get through the exam.
- Repeat your coping strategies until you can go back to the exam.

After the test

- Analyze what went well and what you could have done better.
- Keep track of the coping strategies that worked well, and continue to practice them.
- Make a plan for preparing for your next test by including what you learned about test taking from this experience.