PREPARING FOR TESTS

1. **Keep up with your reading assignments** so that studying for a test will be the reviewing of familiar material. Frantic last-minute cramming of new material usually results in faulty remembering.

2. To avoid completely rereading textbook assignments later, prepare them for reviewing by **underlining key words and phrases** and outlining underlined material.

3. Do not be afraid to **ask questions** about material you do not understand. You cannot remember something unless you first understand it.

4. **Review each course at least once a week** during the semester. Reread class notes, workbook exercises, outside reading notes, textbook underlining, etc.

5. In reviewing, **spend most time on the material that is least familiar**, but review briefly the material that is most familiar.

6. In reviewing, **prepare a list of likely test questions** and make certain that you can give the correct answers to each in your own words.

7. **Keep, correct, and review returned quizzes and exams.** Check with your instructor if you are uncertain about the correct answer to a question that you missed.

8. **Study your instructor's "test technique"** so you will know what type of objective question he favors and what kind of essay answer he expects.

9. Concentrate on remembering **specific details** (who, when, where) when studying for an objective test; concentrate on understanding **broad concepts** (what, why, how) when studying for an essay exam.

10. **Study and practice on questions** from your textbook, workbook, previous exams, and other sources also available from your instructor.

11. Ask the instructor **what material will be covered** on an examination--textbook assignments, class lectures, outside reading, movies and filmstrips, laboratory experiments, etc.

12. **Complete long-term projects well in advance** of scheduled exams so that your time will be free for intensive review.

13. To minimize study fatigue, break intensive study sessions with 5-10 minute **rest periods** every hour.
14. Review likely test questions with other students in **small study groups** of two to four members after each has **first** studied independently.

15. **Do not stay up all night** "cramming" for an exam. This endangers your health and your test grade. You will be able to think more logically if you get a reasonable amount of sleep before a major test.

**HOW TO TAKE TESTS**

**Before the test:**

1. Review lecture notes, textbooks, quizzes, and other tests. Organize and consolidate the information.

2. Make a summary sheet, listing key terms, ideas, and categories. A vocabulary list is also a list of concepts.

3. Look at previous tests you've taken from this instructor to get an idea of the style of test to expect.

4. Formulate possible questions. Test yourself. Review those areas that are troublesome.

5. Attend class the day before the test. Instructors usually give general hints and/or specific suggestions about the content of the test.

6. If you must cram, be selective of material in tests, texts, and notes, and **RECITE, RECITE, RECITE**. There will be no need to cram if you get in the habit of organized note taking, regular recitation, and systematic review.

7. Collect necessary pens and pencils the night before so that there will be no need to rush.

8. Get a good night's sleep; eat a nutritious meal; and feel confident.

**During the test:**

1. Arrive 5 minutes early. Find a seat away from distracters (friends, doors, windows). Get pens and pencils ready.

2. Think positively!

3. Compose yourself. Consciously relax and take a few deep breaths. Think of your reward after the test is completed.
4. When the test is in your hands:
   a. Read and reread all directions carefully.
   b. Read through the entire test, noting point values and time allotments. Plan your test time schedule accordingly. Allow 5 minutes at the end of the test to proofread your work.
   c. Jot down any information you think you might forget.
   d. Note the key words in the questions.
   e. Answer the easy questions first, and answer every question, unless points are subtracted for guessing.
   f. Circle questions you're not sure of; return to them later when you can spend more time on them.
   g. On multiple choice questions, read every possible answer before you choose the most correct choice.

5. While the test is still in your hands, take 5 minutes to review your answers before handing in your test. In essay tests, read your responses to be certain you've said what you wanted to. In objective tests, make sure your answers are clear; erase stray marks, etc.

After the test:

1. In your notebook, jot down questions you were unsure of. Find answers in your text or lecture notes. (You may see the questions again on a later test.)

2. When the test is returned, review it and analyze your errors. Find correct answers, so that you can use them while studying for later tests.

3. Analyze your test-preparation and test-taking strategies. Note the techniques you'd like to use next time and the techniques which were of no help.

4. Study any comments by the instructor. If you still have questions, see the instructor during office hours or by appointment. That’s what they are for!

**TAKING AN OBJECTIVE TEST**

An objective test is one where the grader's opinions and values are not a factor. Your job on an objective exam is to choose the best answer from those listed. You need to recall or recognize words, facts, or names. Unfortunately, not all test questions are well-written and you may be forced to guess at what the evaluator wants. The main reason why students may have difficulty with objective tests is their inability to reason. It is important that you are able to read and interpret the questions correctly and then decide which selection is the most reasonable.
Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Read the directions carefully.

2. Answer each question in your mind before reading the possible answers. This will help eliminate the possibility of being confused by those choices.

3. Mark questions you cannot answer immediately and come back to them if you have time.

4. If you have no clue as to what the answer is, use the following guidelines to help you guess (if you are not penalized for guessing):
   a. If two of the answers are similar, except for one or two words, choose the more reasonable answer of the two.
   b. If two of the answers have similar-sounding or -looking words (i.e., intermediate, intermittent), choose one of them.
   c. If two of the answers have quantities that are almost the same, choose one of them.
   d. If the answer calls for a sentence completion, eliminate the answers that would not form grammatically correct sentences.
   e. If answers cover a wide range, (i.e., 4.5, 66.7, 88.7, 90.1, 55.011) choose one in the middle.
   f. If there is no penalty for guessing and none of the above techniques work, close your eyes and go for it!

True/False Questions

Answer true/false questions quickly. Generally, these questions will not be worth many points individually. Don't invest a lot of time to get 2 points on a 100-point exam. Remember: If ANY part of the statement is FALSE, the ENTIRE statement is FALSE!

Look for qualifiers like "all," "most," "sometimes," "never," or "rarely." These are the key words upon which the question depends. Absolute qualifiers such as "always" and "never" generally indicate a false statement.

Short-Answer/Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

These questions often ask for definitions or short descriptions. Pick up points fast when you work the fill-in-the-blank section of a test. Concentrate on key words and facts. Be brief.

This is where over-learning really pays off. When you know a subject backward and forward, you can answer this type of question almost as fast as you can write.
Then you answer such questions; choose your words carefully, for the evaluator has something specific in mind: a technical term, a key word in a main idea, or an important detail. If the instructor's comments differ from those in the text on a particular topic, answer according to the instructor's information, which is probably more up-to-date. If you cannot think of the answer that is called for, write down something that represents your best guess. Such answers sometimes get partial credit.

Matching

Read down the list of all items to be matched in one question in order to get an idea of the range of possibilities. Then take the first item on the left and read down the items on the right until you find one you are sure is the best match. If you are not certain, leave the item and go on to the next one. The general idea is to first complete all the matches you are sure of. This reduces the number of possibilities for the difficult matches and simplifies the process of elimination. Some matching questions consist only of words or brief phrases to be matched; others may contain whole clauses similar to those in true/false or multiple choice statements.

TAKING AN ESSAY TEST

Before you begin writing:

1. Read the entire test. Some questions may be easier than others.

2. Read through each question and underline key words. This will help you focus on what the question is asking.

3. Before attempting to answer a question, put it in your own words. Compare your version with the original. Do they mean the same thing? If not, you have misread the question. You will be surprised how often this happens.

4. Organize your answer. In the margin by each question, write down either an informal outline or a list of things you remember about the question.

5. Decide which question you will answer first. (It should be the one you know the most about.)

6. Budget your time. Set up a time schedule for answering questions. Allow time to proofread your answers at the end.

Writing your answer:

1. Make your answer readable. Neatness counts. The best essay answers are compact, complete, and clear.
2. Take time to write a good introduction and a summary. The introduction should include your topic sentence—the main point to be made; the summary should simply paraphrase the introduction.

3. Use your first sentence to restate the question as a statement or to tell what you are going to say in your response. Look back at this sentence as you write to see if you are staying in focus.

4. Use correct paragraph form. Unless the question specifically asks for an outline, compose your answer in sentences and paragraphs. As you write your answer, go back and check off each key word as you answer that part of the question.

5. Make your main points easy to find. State each new point at the beginning of a paragraph. For lengthy or multi-part answers, you might use headings to keep the answer organized.

6. Include sufficient information. Think of your answer as a process of convincing the reader that you know your material. Never allow your answer to wander away from the focus of the question and do not repeat yourself. Each sentence should include new material and new facts. Do not give unnecessary information just to show how much you have learned.

7. Avoid opinions or judgments.

If you are unsure of the answer or you are running out of time:

1. If you do not know much about what you are asked to write, phrase your answer in general terms. You may receive partial credit.

2. Qualify your answer if you are in doubt. It is better to say "Toward the end of the 19th century" than to say "In 1894" when you cannot remember whether it was 1884 or 1894. Unless you are positive about a detail, avoid very definite statements.

3. If you are running out of time, use single words or brief phrases to present the remaining information. You may receive partial credit.

When you have finished writing:

1. Proofread your answer.

2. Make sure you have covered each point of the question.

3. Check details: spelling, sentence structure, word forms.
KEY WORDS IN ESSAY QUESTIONS
from How to Study, by Clifford T. Morgan and James Deese

COMPARE
Look for qualities or characteristics that resemble each other. Emphasize similarities among them, but in some cases also mention differences.

CONTRAST
Stress the dissimilarities, differences, or unlikeliness of things, qualities, events, or problems.

CRITICIZE
Express your judgment about the merit or truth of the factors or views mentioned. Give the results of your analysis of these factors, discussing their limitations and good points.

DEFINE
Give concise, clear, and authoritative meanings. Do not give details, but make sure to give the limits of the definition. Show how the thing you are defining differs from things in other classes.

DESCRIBE
Recount, characterize, sketch, or relate in sequence or story form.

DIAGRAM
Give a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic answer. Usually you should label a diagram. In some cases, add a brief explanation or description.

DISCUSS
Examine, analyze carefully, and give reasons pro and con. Be complete; give details.

ENUMERATE
Write in list or outline form, giving points concisely one by one.

EVALUATE
Carefully appraise the problems, citing both advantages and limitations. Emphasize the appraisal of authorities and, to a lesser degree, your personal evaluation.

EXPLAIN
Clarify, interpret, and spell out the material you present. Give reasons for differences of opinion or of results and try to analyze causes.

ILLUSTRATE
Use a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example to explain or clarify a problem.

INTERPRET
Translate, give examples of, solve, or comment on a subject, usually giving your judgment about it.

JUSTIFY
Prove or give reasons for decisions or conclusions, taking pains to be convincing.

LIST
As in "enumerate," write an itemized series or concise statements.

OUTLINE
Organize a description under main points and subordinate points, omitting minor details and stressing the arrangement or classification of things.

PROVE
Establish that something is true by citing factual evidence or giving clear logical reasons.

RELATE
Show how things are related to, or connected with, each other or how one causes another, correlates with another, or is like another.

REVIEW
Examine a subject critically, analyzing and commenting on the important statements to be made about it.

STATE
Present the main points in brief, clear sequence, usually omitting details, illustrations, or examples.

SUMMARIZE
Give the main points or facts in condensed form, like the summary of a chapter, omitting details and illustrations.

TRACE
In narrative form, describe progress, development, or historical events from some point of origin.
RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Benson's Relaxation Response

1. Sit comfortably in a place where you are unlikely to be disturbed.
2. Relax muscles, beginning with the feet and working up to the head.
3. Breathe through your nose. When breathing becomes regular, say "one" on each exhalation.
4. Let thoughts drift through your mind like clouds drifting through the sky.

Tension-Relaxation Method

Contract muscles and hold for a count of 30, then relax them completely. Follow this sequence: jaw, neck, shoulders, hands, feet, stomach, back.

Quick Relaxation Break

Close your eyes, roll shoulders down, let both arms hang limp at your sides; now, take a few deep breaths until you feel relaxed.

3-5 Minute "Get-Away"

Close your eyes and imagine that you are in the quietest and most peaceful place that you know. Picture the details of this scene as realistically as you can; really try to "be there."