

Test Taking Tips

Before the Test

- **Build Expectancy:**
Think of self in changeable terms. Just because you had one negative experience on a test or quiz does not mean that is an indicator for future failure. Build an emotional wall to separate the past, present, and future.
- **Predict:** Talk with your instructor about the format of the test, length, time limit, and any special instructions.
- **Schedule time with no distractions to study**
- **Get tutoring if needed**
- **Sleep:** All nighters are a bad idea. Being fatigued can effect brain function and not allow you to perform at your best.
- **Eat a good breakfast before you go.** Foods that are low in fat and high in protein are helpful.
- **Know your Learning Style:** Use that as an asset with studying. If you know you are a visual learner, make flashcards. For example, if you learn by writing things down, then do it!
- **Approach the test with a positive attitude, prepare yourself emotionally, and eliminate any negative thoughts.**
- **Remind yourself that you studied and know the material.**
- **Arrive early for the test and bring all supplies.**
- **Listen to the instructor's directions.**

During the Test:

- **Relax**
The bottom line is that when you are nervous, you don't perform as well. If you encounter a tough question, you might start to panic. Panicking creates distraction and distraction creates poor performance, and poor performance creates even more panic. Before you begin a test, take a few deep breaths in through your nose to the count of 4 and out through your mouth to the count of 4.
- **Preview the Entire Test**
Before you begin, scan the test and assess which parts of the test are easier for you than others. Do the easy parts first. This will encourage you and give you more confidence. Save the difficult portions till the end so you don't get discouraged early on in the test. This will also help you pace the test and get an estimation of how long it will take to complete the test.
- **Jot down any mnemonic devices that will help you on the test**
- **Keep an eye on the clock so you can pace yourself**
- **Check your answers, but usually your first response is correct**

Typical Responses to Test Questions:

- Quick Time Response: This is the response you have when you read a test question and immediately answer it.
- Lag-Time Response: This is when you read a question and the answer does not come to you immediately. You may have to re-read the question and think for a moment before the answer comes to you.
- No Response: This is the least desirable. As you may have guessed, this is when you read the question and you have no idea what the answer is. Here are some tips:
 1. Leave the question till the end.
 2. Make an intelligent guess.
 3. Eliminate all unreasonable answers.
 4. Watch for modifiers (all, most, least, etc.).
 5. See if one question answers the other.
 6. Look for hints throughout the test.
 7. Don't panic, move on.

Multiple Choice Tests

- Read the entire question. You may think you know what it is saying, but you may miss something.
- Try to answer the question before looking at the answer choices. Sometimes the answer choices can be confusing.
- Examine all answer choices
- Make sure you take your time and not go too fast
- Recognize that answers containing extreme modifiers such as always, every, and never are usually wrong
- Cross off answers that you know are incorrect
- Recognize that when the answers are all numbers that usually the highest and lowest are incorrect
- If you cannot answer a question, move on to the next one. Another question may trigger the answer you missed

Matching Questions

- Read each column before you answer to determine if there are an equal number of items in each column.
- Match what you know first
- Cross off what you have already used
- Use process of elimination and logical clues

True/False Questions

- Watch for key words such as many, some, few, and often, never, and all
- Watch for double negatives such as "not untruthful"

- Remember that if any part of the statement is false, the entire statement is false

Essay Questions

- More is not always better. Try to be as concise as possible
- Pay attention to the action word used in the question when you respond (discuss, analyze, justify, prove, etc.)
- Write a thesis statement for each answer
- Outline your thoughts before you begin writing
- Use details (time, dates, places, and proper names) when appropriate
- Make sure to answer all parts of the question
- Summarize your main ideas at the end of your answer
- Proofread your answer

References

Sherfeld, R.M., Montgomery, R. J., & Moody, P. M. (2006) *Cornerstone, Building on Your Best for Career Success*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

VanderStoep, S. W. & Pintrich, P. R. (2008). *Learning to Learn: The Skill and Will of College Success*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson-Prentice Hall