

Test-Taking Preparation Strategies

Let me let you in on a little secret. Our effort determines our outcome. And if we fail to plan then we're really planning to fail. So, I am asking you, because you are worth it and have what it takes, to set a goal, to create a plan to achieve that goal, and then to invest the effort to achieve the goal.

1. What is your goal for this exam? Do you just want to pass? Earn an "A"? What?
2. What do you plan to do to achieve your goal? Write down at least three things. (For example, I will read over all of my notes, quizzes, and textbook for three hours, from 6 to 9, on Wednesday. On Thursday, from 1 to 3, I will brainstorm, create a thesis, and outline my essay, as well as create flashcards for the matching portion of the exam. On Friday, I will review my notes and write my three short answers, as well as study my flash cards and write my essay introduction and my sub-claims for my body paragraph. On Saturday, I will write the bodies of my essay paragraphs and conclusion, as well as study my notecards. On Sunday, I will proofread my short answers and essay; I will rewrite my thesis statement, introduction, and each of my opening sub-claim statements in each of my paragraphs.)
3. In order to obtain a goal, you have to have one, you have to come up with a plan of action to achieve it, and then you have to do all of those things. But you also have to be aware of things you should not do, things that will destroy your effort to succeed. Name at least three things you will not do over the next few days, so you can focus on the things you have planned to do to succeed. (I will not party. I will not play video games, text, or browse the internet while studying. I will not engage in drama with my boyfriend/girlfriend/friends, etc.)
4. Pay attention in classes and watch for clues, as many teachers have a method for preparing tests and quizzes and they usually use that same method each time or they may give hints a certain topic will be on the test. Also, if your instructor repeats a topic that is a good indication they will probably test you on it.
5. Ask questions! Don't be afraid to ask your instructor for clarification about a topic or the best way to study for their tests. Most teachers are open to sharing suggestions or secrets they have learned over time.

6. Hydrate and get plenty of rest and exercise, as this will help you perform well during the test. Remember cramming late the night before will not help you perform on a test well.

Lastly, all of the planning in the world does not stop emergencies or unexpected things from happening. How will you avoid drama or deal with it quickly should it happen, so you can do the things you committed yourself to do to achieve your goal on this test?

During test

First, read all the directions carefully to make sure you don't lose points for not doing everything being asked.

Preview the test to see how much time to give each section. If all multiple choice questions, it's good to know that.

Do a "brain dump" of information somewhere on the pages provided to relieve the stress of "forgetting" or the stress of losing the information once you've started answering questions.

Work on the easiest parts first. If you know your best at essay questions or want to get those type questions out of your brain first, start there to maximize time and points.

When answering essay questions, make a short outline in the margin before writing to make sure it's organized and clear.

If you don't know some questions, make the best educated guess you can, as to not leave any questions unanswered.

Save some time at the end to review your test and make sure you haven't left out any answers or parts of answers but remember to always stick with your initial "gut" instinct, as it is most often the right answer.