

Test Taking Strategies

Test Preparation

1. The most important factor for success on an exam is to prepare early and adequately.
 - a. Make sure you are in every class, focused on what is going on, and know when tests will be given.
 - b. Consistently complete your homework.
 - c. Ensure that you know what material will be covered.
 - d. Space studying out over days or weeks for shorter periods of time than cramming all the information in a short period. Cramming can also increase anxiety which interferes with clear thinking.
 - e. The key to learning is repetition. Review information more than once.
2. Control some of the other mental aspects behind examinations.
 - a. Visualize yourself doing well.
 - b. Your attitude can affect your confidence and performance – both positively and negatively. Be aware of your attitude and train your thoughts to be positive so your mind expects success instead of failure.
3. Get a good night's sleep. Rest, exercise, and eating well (especially breakfast) are as important to test-taking as they are to other schoolwork.

Test Strategies

4. Remember that you should expect some anxiety. Don't panic – relax and cope steadily with the situation.
5. Arrive at the test room a few minutes early to eliminate some unnecessary anxiety.
6. Make yourself physically comfortable during the test.
7. Focus your attention entirely on your work.
8. If you experience anxiety on the test and develop negative thoughts, counter them with positive thoughts and actions. Practice tension-release exercises.
9. Have everything that you need to start well (sharpened pencils, calculator, etc.).
10. Listen to and read all directions very carefully before starting – assume nothing! If you don't understand the directions, ask for a better explanation.
11. Put down all vital information right away.
12. Look quickly at the entire examination to see what types of questions are included (multiple choice, matching, true/false, essay, etc.).
13. Read the **entire** question carefully before you begin to attempt your response.
 - a. Pay attention to words that affect the meaning of a question (examples: no, not, never, always, compare, contrast)
 - b. Look for "leads" in questions that may help suggest answers to other questions.
14. Answer the easy questions first by skipping anything you don't know. Then go back and answer the tough questions. Have a return path marked so you know what you need to come back to.

15. Know the right way and when you can guess. If there is no penalty for guessing on a question there should be nothing left blank.
16. Know how to answer different types of questions:
- a. Multiple Choice
 - i. Try to come up with the answer before looking at all the options.
 - ii. Read all the choices.
 - iii. Eliminate the absolutes (*always, never, every, best, etc.*).
 - b. True / False
 - i. Look for the one word determiners.
 - ii. Statements of *always, never, every, all, and none* are usually false.
 - iii. Statements of *usually, often, sometimes, most, and none* are usually false.
 - c. Short Answer / Essay
 - i. Start with the easiest question to build confidence.
 - ii. Brainstorm before writing.
 - iii. When you write, make sure it is legible, clear, concise, and complete.
 - d. Approaching Math Questions
 - i. Estimate what the answer will be first – then solve.
 - ii. Start by drawing a picture or diagram if necessary.
 - iii. Don't become bogged down on a single question – move on.
 - iv. Show all your work.
 - e. Open Book Tests
 - i. Highlight or bookmark your notes with important information before starting the test.
17. Have a plan for pacing and keep track of your time.
18. If your time is running out, concentrate on the questions you know well and/or have the most weight on the test.
19. If you complete the test before time is up, check your work to catch small errors or complete ideas. Don't change your answers unless you are sure of yourself.

After the Test

20. Don't worry over the test once it is completed. Remind yourself that a test is only a learning tool and that there will probably be others. Try not to compare yourself with others.
21. Always carefully review your test after they have been returned. Check your errors as well as look for errors by the grader.
22. Learn what you did well and what you can use for your personal improvement.