

# TEST-TAKING

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## Test-taking strategies you can employ to *make the grade!*

- Attend class regularly!
- Avoid cramming
- Create a study group and teach each other the material
- Know the test format
- Over-learning never hurts and often helps
- Summarize notes and study outline before the test to review key terms
- Take breaks during study time. 10 minutes for every hour of studying is recommended
- Eat well, RELAX and get a good night's sleep

## Essay Test Strategies

- Read all the questions before beginning. Look for key terms that may help “jog” memory
- Begin by answering the easiest question. This will lessen frustration and build confidence
- Jot down any ideas which immediately come to mind
- Make an outline. If you don't finish, the professor will see where you were trying to go
- Keep track of the time. Do not spend more time on questions which are worth fewer points
- Write legibly. Leave space for added ideas and corrections
- Check for grammatical errors and misspellings before turning in your test

## Multiple Choice Strategies

- Use the process of elimination. It is easy to pick out the answers which are obviously wrong
- Answer question before reading answer choices. This will help you anticipate what the answer choices might be
- If you do not know the answer, go on because the answer may be found in subsequent questions
- Beware of questions with “no”, “not”, and “none”. These words easily change the meaning of questions
- Change your answer if you feel strongly about it

## If You Must Guess

- Reject answers that use specific determiners such as: everyone, always, never, etc.
- Choose answers that use qualifying terms such as: Often, most, etc.
- Choose the answer that first caught your eye.

## -Assessing Your Test-Taking Patterns-

Evaluating your own test taking habits and identifying your weaknesses are the first steps toward improving your performance, not only as a test-taker, but also as a tutor. Do any of the following apply to you?

- **Information Gap:** *I do not remember encountering this material, I glossed over it, or did not have it in my notes.*
- **Retention Gap:** *I studied this, but could not call it up from memory.*
- **Over/Under Generalization:** *I eliminated too much or not enough information when studying for this test.*
- **Misinterpretation of Information:** *I misunderstood the information when I read the text or heard it in lecture.*
- **Misreading:** *I made errors in reading the question or response (reading too fast, not for depth, etc.).*
- **General Vocabulary Gap:** *I did not know the correct meaning of general vocabulary/terms.*
- **Inability to Decipher:** *I could not get past the grammatical structure of the question or response.*
- **Jumping to Conclusions:** *I did not fully consider all the responses or did not consider the question carefully.*
- **Miskeying:** *I knew the correct answer, but copied the wrong response on the answer sheet.*

## Managing Test Anxiety

**Recognition** – Listen to your body and decide why you are feeling anxious.

**Preparation** – Do not prepare for a test the night before and expect to learn everything.

**Attitude** – Your frame of mind concerning an exam can have an effect on how well you do on the exam. Remember: this is only one test.

**Physical Needs** – Maintain good eating and sleeping habits.

**Test Day** – Avoid caffeine, sugar, and nicotine because these stimulants set off a process that can result in rapid fluctuations of sugar levels, which produce symptoms of anxiety and panic. Arrive at the test location early. Wear a watch and check it frequently as you pace yourself through the test.

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## -Successful Strategies for Taking Tests-

### **Before you Begin:**

1. **Preview the test before you answer anything.** This gets you thinking about the material. Make sure to note the point value of each question. This will give you some ideas on budgeting your time.
2. **Do a mind dump.** Using what you saw in the preview, make notes of anything you think you might forget. Write down things that you used in learning the material that might help you remember; outline your answers to discussion questions.
3. **Quickly calculate how much time you should allow for each section according to the point value.** You do not want to spend 30 minutes on an essay question that counts only 5 points.

### **Taking a Test:**

4. **Read the directions.** Can more than one answer be correct? Are you penalized for guessing? Never assume that you know what the directions say.
5. **Answer the easy questions first.** This will give you the confidence and momentum to get through the rest of the test. You are sure these answers are correct.
6. **Go back to the difficult questions.** While looking over the test and doing the easy questions, your subconscious mind will have been working on the answers to the harder ones. In addition, later items on the test might give you useful or needed information for earlier items.
7. **Answer all questions** unless you are penalized for wrong answers.
8. **Ask the instructor to explain any items that are not clear.** Do not ask for the answer, but phrase your question in a way that shows the instructor that you have the information but are not sure what the question is asking for.
9. **Try to answer the questions from the instructor's point of view.** Try to remember what the instructor emphasized and felt was important.
10. **Use the margin to explain why you chose the answer** if the question does not seem clear or if the answer seems ambiguous.
11. **Circle key words in difficult questions.** This will force you to focus on the central point.
12. **Express difficult questions in your own words.** Rephrasing can make it clear to you, but be sure you do not change the meaning of the question.
13. **Use all of the time allotted for the test.** If you have extra time, cover up your answers and actually rework the question.

## **CHECK OUT MORE ACADEMIC RESOURCES ON OUR WEBSITE:**

<http://studentsuccess.louisiana.edu/tutoringresources>