

Test Taking Tips and Strategies



Exam Prep



- ✓ Keep a positive attitude throughout the whole test and try to stay relaxed. If you start to feel nervous take a few deep breaths to relax.
- ✓ When you first receive your test, do a quick survey of the entire test so that you know how to efficiently budget your time.
- ✓ Do the easiest problems first. Don't stay on a problem that you are stuck on, especially when time is a factor.
- ✓ Do the problems that have the greatest point values first.
- ✓ Pace yourself, don't rush. Read the entire question and pay attention to the details.
- ✓ Ask the instructor for clarification if you don't understand what they are asking for on the test.
- ✓ Write legibly. If the grader can't read what you wrote, they'll most likely mark it wrong.
- ✓ Always read the whole question carefully. Don't make assumptions about what the question might be.
- ✓ If you don't know an answer, skip it. Go on with the rest of the test and come back to it later. Other parts of the test may have some information that will help you out with that question.
- ✓ Don't worry if others finish before you. Focus on the test in front of you.
- ✓ If you have time left when you are finished, look over your test. Make sure that you have answered all the questions. Only change an answer if you misread or misinterpreted the question because the first answer that you put is usually the correct one. Watch out for careless mistakes and proofread your essay and/or short answer questions.

Quiet!

EXAM IN PROGRESS



Test Time

- ✓ Double check to make sure that you put your first and last name on the test.

Preparation for your first test should begin on the first day of class; this includes paying attention during class, taking good notes, studying, completing homework assignments and reviewing study materials on a regular basis.

- ✓ Budget your time, make sure you have sufficient time to study so that you are well prepared for the test.
- ✓ Go to review sessions, pay attention to hints that the instructor may give about the test. Take notes and ask questions about items you may be confused about.
- ✓ Ask the instructor to specify the areas that will be emphasized on the test.
- ✓ Make sure you go to the class right before the test; it's another prime time for the instructor to give out more hints or the format of the test.
- ✓ Go over any material from practice tests, HW's, sample problems, review material, the textbook, class notes...
- ✓ Eat before a test. Having food in your stomach will give you energy and help you focus but avoid heavy foods which can make you groggy.
- ✓ Don't try to pull an all nighter. Get at least 3 hours of sleep before the test (normally 8 hours of sleep a night is recommended but if you are short on time, get at least 3 hours so that you'll be well rested enough to focus during the test).
- ✓ Put the main ideas/information/formulas onto a sheet that can be quickly reviewed many times, this makes it easier to retain the key concepts that will be on the test.
- ✓ Try to show up at least 5 minutes before the test will start.
- ✓ Set your alarm and have a backup alarm set as well.
- ✓ Go to the bathroom before walking into the exam room. You don't want to waste anytime worrying about your bodily needs during the test.

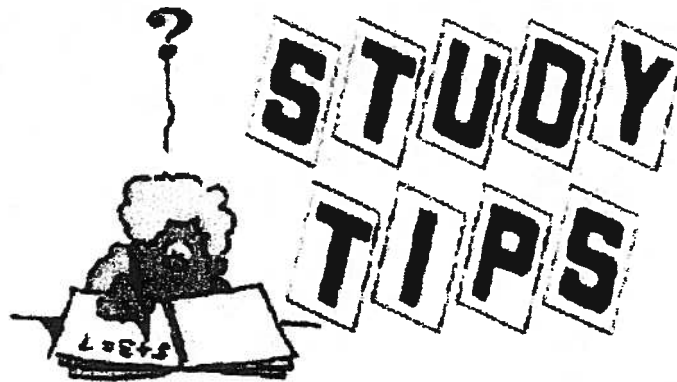
Study Tips

Students with better study methods and strategies score higher on their exams.

- ✓ Everyone is different. Different methods work for different people; the following are only suggestions on improving upon your current studying techniques.
- ✓ It is best to review the material right after class when it's still fresh in your memory.
- ✓ Don't try to do all your studying the night before the test. Instead space out your studying, review class materials at least several times a week, focusing on one topic at a time.
- ✓ Have all of your study material in front of you: lecture notes, course textbooks, study guides and any other relevant material.
- ✓ Find a comfortable and quiet place to study with good lighting and little distractions (try avoiding your own bed; it is very tempting to just lie down and take a nap).
- ✓ Start out by studying the most important information.
- ✓ Learn the general concepts first, don't worry about learning the details until you have learned the main ideas.
- ✓ Take notes and write down a summary of the important ideas as you read through your study material.
- ✓ Take short breaks frequently. Your memory retains the information that you study at the beginning and the end better than what you study in the middle.
- ✓ Space out your studying, you'll learn more by studying a little every day instead of waiting to cram at the last minute. By studying every day, the material will stay in your long-term memory but if you try to study at the last moment, the material will only reside in your short-term memory that you'll easily forget.
- ✓ Make sure that you understand the material well, don't just read through the material and try to memorize everything.
- ✓ If you choose to study in a group, only study with others who are serious about the test.

✓ Test yourself or have someone test you on the material to find out what your weak and strong areas are. You can use the review questions at the end of each chapter, practice tests that the teacher may give out or other pertinent materials.

✓ Listening to relaxing music such as classical or jazz on a low volume can relieve some of the boredom of studying.



L	Leave the hard ones for last
E	Erase and fix your answers when checking your work
A	Add details to your paragraphs to make them more interesting
R	Read and reread to dig out answers you need
N	Never give up, and do your best!!



Reducing Test Taking Anxiety

Test anxiety is when a student excessively worries about doing well on a test. This can become a major hindrance on test performance and cause extreme nervousness and memory lapses among other symptoms. The following are tips on reducing test taking anxiety.

- ✓ Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test taking anxiety.
- ✓ Space out your studying over a few days or weeks and continually review class material. Don't try to learn everything the night before.
- ✓ Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test.
- ✓ Exercising for a few days before the test will help reduce stress.
- ✓ Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- ✓ Show up to class early so you won't have to worry about being late.
- ✓ Chew gum (if allowed) during the test to help relieve test anxiety.
- ✓ Stay relaxed, if you begin to get nervous take a few deep breaths slowly to relax yourself and then get back to work.
- ✓ Read the directions slowly and carefully.
- ✓ If you don't understand the directions on the test, ask the teacher to explain it to you.
- ✓ Skim through the test so that you have a good idea how to pace yourself.
- ✓ Write down important formulas, facts, definitions and/or keywords in the margin first so you won't worry about forgetting them.
- ✓ Do the simple questions first to help build up your confidence for the harder questions.
- ✓ Don't worry about how fast other people finish their test; just concentrate on your own test.

Multiple Choice Test Tips

- Always cover up the possible responses with a piece of paper or with your hand while you read the *stem*, or body of the question.

Try to anticipate the correct response before you are distracted by seeing the options that your instructor has provided. Then, uncover the responses.

- If you see the response that you anticipated, circle it and then check to be sure that none of the other responses is better.
- If you do not see a response that you expected, then consider some of the following strategies to eliminate responses that are probably wrong.

1. Read the question and try to answer it **BEFORE** looking at the answers.

1. The capital of Alberta is

Read the question. You know the answer is "Edmonton". Start by looking for "Edmonton" among the answers. By thinking of the answer *first*, you are less likely to be fooled by a wrong answer.

1. The capital of Alberta is
 - A) Ottawa
 - B) Calgary
 - C) Edmonton
 - D) Lethbridge

But make sure you look at all the answers before choosing:

1. Edmonton can be described as Alberta's
 - A) capital city
 - B) largest city
 - C) gateway to the north
 - D) all of the above

Even though (A) is true, (D) is the correct answer. It is important to read all the answers, and not just take the first correct answer you see.

2. Do not spend too much time on any one question.

Sometimes the question will seem to have no right answer:

1. The capital of Alberta is

- A) Red Deer
- B) Calgary
- C) Taber
- D) Lethbridge

2. Your teacher may have made a mistake. There may *not* be a right answer. It is important not to waste too much time trying to answer an impossible question. Choose an answer at random, but circle the question number so you can come back to it later if you have extra time. Go on to the next question.

Similarly, if a question is too hard, or you just do not know the answer, choose an answer at random and come back when you have completed all the questions you do know. Use whatever time is left over at the end of the test to tackle these very difficult questions.

3. If the question asks you something you do not know, see if you can cross out any of the wrong answers before you guess:

1. The capital of Alabama is

- A) Montgomery
- B) Birmingham
- C) Edmonton
- D) Ottawa

You may not know anything about Alabama. But you do know that Edmonton and Ottawa are Canadian cities. So (C) and (D) *must be wrong* answers for this question. By crossing out Edmonton and Ottawa, you only have to guess between (A) or (B). That means you have a 50/50 chance of getting it right, just by guessing.

By carefully eliminating answers you know must be wrong, you can increase your chances of guessing correctly.

Imagine that you only know the answers to half the questions on a multiple-choice test. Normally, your score would be 50%. But if you can eliminate *one* wrong answer for each question you are unsure about, you could bring your score up to 67%. If you can eliminate *two* wrong answers for each question you are unsure about, you could raise your score to 75%.

[The answer to question 3 is (A). Birmingham is the largest city in Alabama, but Montgomery is the capital.]

4. Do not keep changing your answer.

Sometimes the question will seem to have two right answers:

1. Which of the following is a capital city?

- A) Ottawa
- B) Calgary
- C) Edmonton
- D) Lethbridge

Choose the answer that seems best to you (Ottawa?) and move on to the next question. Do not keep changing your mind. Research shows that your first choice was probably the right one. Most people who change their answers will change from a correct one to a wrong one. Only change your answer if you are absolutely sure you made a mistake. (For example, if another question on the test reminds you of the right answer.)

5. After you have finished the test, go back to those questions you circled as being too hard or as having no right answer.

See if you can answer them now. Take as much time as you have. Never leave a test early, unless you are sure you have answered every question correctly.

If you still cannot answer the question, then guess. You have a 25% chance of getting it right anyway; more if you can eliminate one or more of the wrong answers. Never leave a blank on a multiple-choice test.

