

Really! Preparing for and taking tests can be relatively stress-free. It doesn't have to be a problem for you ...**IF**...you have shored up your study skills.

- Have you learned to **manage your time** well?
- Have you stored the needed information in your long **term-memory**?
- Are your **notes** in good shape?
- Have you perfected your skill at **reading your textbook**?

If the answer is no to the questions above, be sure to get help from a study skill workshop, pick up a handout on any or all of the above topics, or seek more information on the “how-to’s” from a counselor in the Counseling Center.

WHAT CAN I DO AHEAD OF TIME?

- Every time you study, study as if you were preparing to take a test over that material. **Develop questions and answers** as you go. Think about questions (and answer them yourself) that you might later find on a test. As you do your reading, listening, and taking notes, think of that time as studying for an exam. Look for the main ideas and what the instructor has been emphasizing.
- Use a **study group** to develop possible test questions and answers.
- Take this one step further and **write out answers to questions** you think might be on the test. Even if it's going to be a multiple-choice test, think of it in terms of an essay test. If you can master the answers to a short essay question, you will be prepared to answer multiple-choice or true-false items as well.
- **Organize** your study time. Use several sort review sessions. Plan ahead and begin your reviewing several days to several weeks before the test. For example, do not wait till the night before to catch up on or finish reading the chapters you were supposed to have read earlier—good time management pays off here.
- Review any returned tests to **learn from any mistakes** you've made. Often you can discover a pattern to how you've made mistakes if you analyze past tests. For example, did you not plan your test-taking time well? Did you find you didn't review your notes well enough? Did you make silly errors because you didn't read the question carefully? There are various other mistake patterns to consider as well.
- You can also determine a pattern to **what the instructor is looking for** when you look at previous tests.
- Make sure you **attend class** the day prior to the test. Lots of information about the test may be given at that time.

IT'S TIME NOW FOR THE TEST. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- Get to the test at least **5 minutes early**—to relax and not feel rushed. Try to sit in your usual place in the room.
- **Listen to directions** and **read the test directions** and follow them exactly. Preview the test so you have an idea of what you need to accomplish during the time period.

- Do a **mind dump**. Wherever you can (on the side of the test, on the back, etc.), jot down any information you want to be sure to remember. This is especially valuable for tests for which you need formulas, definitions, lists or facts.
- **Budget your time**. Don't sacrifice one part of the test for another. If you have a test that has differing point values in it, devote the most time to those parts that have the highest point values.
- Answer the **easiest questions first**. This will build confidence and the easier questions may provide clues for some of the harder ones later. Sometimes multiple-choice and true/false questions are interrelated. Caution—don't lose your place on an answer sheet when skipping some multiple-choice questions.
- Try to **ignore other students**. Don't try to watch others in the room to see if they're further ahead than you are or seem to be working more easily on the test than you are. In other words, don't worry about others—you'll be wasting valuable time and even possibly setting yourself up for test anxiety.
- What about the **students who leave the test before you do**? Do you think they knew more answers than you? Not necessarily—some may and some may have just given up. Don't make some faulty assumptions. Usually good test takers use every minute of the time to make sure their answers are correct.

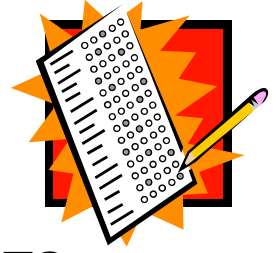
I'M DONE WITH THE TEST NOW. WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE I LEAVE THE ROOM?

Review Your Answers!

- **Scan the test** to make sure you've completed each section and haven't forgotten a section.
- Take a few minutes to **review questions** about which you were uncertain.
- **Proofread** any parts where you had to do some writing.
- What about **changing an answer**? There is no simple solution to this dilemma. Research says that if you are well prepared for the test and feel an answer is now incorrect, you may be better off changing the answer. If you feel strongly about changing an answer, go ahead. You may have picked up clues after that question that helped refocus your thinking. Bottom line—change an answer if you can justify the change. Don't change if you're feeling panicky or running out of time.

SO WHAT CAN I DO IF I NEED MORE HELP THAN WHAT I'VE JUST READ HERE?

The counselors in the Counseling Center have more information and tips to share. Just let them know. Or you can attend one of the academic success workshops held each semester in the Success Center. Pick up a schedule of Success Center workshops for days and times.



Part Two TAKING DIFFERENT TYPES OF TESTS

The Objective Test

Study concepts and examples, as well as facts. Study your textbook and notes by looking for the kind of material that can be answered objectively such as dates, names, precise details, etc.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS.....You must do some careful reading of true-false questions.

- For a statement to be true, all parts of the statement must be true and accurate. For example, if there is a series of items included in the statement, every item must be true before you can mark it as true.
- **Underline the key words**, which are the important ideas or supporting details such as facts, definitions, or vocabulary words. This helps you keep your focus and helps in not misinterpreting the question.
- Pay attention to **details**...dates, names, places, etc.
- Watch for **double negatives**, statements that contain two negatives. Remember your algebra—two negatives make a positive. To interpret it, cross out both negatives and then read it as though it contains no negatives. Example A—*It is ~~not~~ dishonest to tell the truth.* The statement now reads, *It is honest to tell the truth.* Example B—*A surprise is something that is ~~not~~ ~~un~~expected.* Now the statement reads, *A surprise is something that is expected.*
- **Don't look for tricks** or read too much into the question when it seems too easy. Remember if you're well prepared for the test, some true-false questions should be easy.
- Answer all the statements that you know are true or false. When you are not sure at all, you can try the following hints (called "educated guessing"):
 - Watch for statements that include **qualifiers** such as *some, frequently, many, seldom, probably, may, unlikely, and sometimes*. These words, which allow for exceptions, tend to appear in true statements.
 - Watch for **extreme modifiers** such as *always, all, only, none, best, worst, everybody, nobody, certainly, certainly not, and never*. These words tend to appear in false statements.
 - Besides extreme modifiers, be aware of other ways true-false items can be written to make them incorrect. **Watch for**...a change in key words, omitting key words, and adding extraneous information.
 - When you are absolutely uncertain whether a statement is true or false, mark it as true. There is a tendency to include more true statements than false ones.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS.....Designed to test your memory of specific details, but you need to study concepts, not just facts.

- **Read the directions** carefully! Are you being asked for the correct answer or the best choice? Is there more than one answer?
- When preparing for a multiple-choice test, **don't memorize the material** and not take time to really learn it and understand it.
- Work to **eliminate incorrect alternatives**. Look for those you know are wrong. Often you can easily get rid of two or three and narrow down your choice.

- Read the stem and **each option as a true-false question**. If the option is true it may be the correct answer—wait until you’ve done this with each option because you may have to choose the best answer.
- If the above strategies haven’t helped you find the correct answer, use “**educated guessing**.”
 - When “**all of the above**” is a choice, it tends to be the correct answer.
 - When two answers look **similar**, the right answer is often one of the two. Then you’ve narrowed down your choice.
 - When one option is **more inclusive** than the other options, it tends to be the correct one.
 - Just as in true-false questions, watch for **extreme modifiers** in your options. Remember, these extreme modifiers tend to appear in false statements.

MATCHING QUESTIONS

- Look at both lists to understand the types of items you’re supposed to match.
- Use one of the lists as the starting point for making all the matches.
- If one of the lists has longer statements, use it as the starting point.
- Cross out items as you match them.
- First, match only those items that you are sure are matches.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS and FILL IN THE BLANKS.....Designed to test your knowledge of vocabulary or specific facts.

- There are certain things you can do **to prepare** for short answer questions such as...
 - Make a list of and focus on important terms, key words, and facts. Write down a definition of each term as it was used in the course.
 - Think of examples or illustrations for each term.
- **Ask for clarification** when, for example, you must choose between answers you know are correct. Ask the instructor (in general terms, not “*Is this the right answer?*”) for the best way to answer the question.
- **Read the question closely** and focus on key words and ideas in the question to jog your memory of specific details.

The Essay Test

- Give the type of answer the **direction words** call for, words such as *discuss, describe, explain, compare, contrast, evaluate, outline, summarize, define, relate, analyze, etc.*
- **Answer all parts of questions** and write well-organized answers. Even develop a simple outline first before writing your response.
- Write **complete answers**.
- **Write answers that are easy for you to proofread** and easy for your instructor to read. Consider using an erasable ball-point pen so you can erase mistakes and correct them.
- Be sure you do **proofread your answers** before turning them in.

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