

Test Taking Strategies ***(General Information & Objective Tests)***

General Information

1. **Ask your instructor about the test.** When and where will the test be held? How long will it be? What type of questions will be on the test? Which concepts are the most important? Which chapters should be focused on? Ask for some sample test questions.
2. **Give yourself the advantage of a good start;** be certain of the time, place and materials required for the exam; arrive with enough time to arrange your working conditions and build a calm, alert attitude.
3. **Avoid getting involved in a last-minute cram session with panicky classmates.**
4. When you receive the test, use the back to **jot down any information you are worried you might forget.**
5. Write your **name** on each page of the exam.
6. **Skim through the entire test first.** Get a good idea of what the format of the test is and what kind of questions you are being asked. Then plot your strategy by answering the following questions:
 - a. How much time will you spend on each section? Remember, essay questions usually take more time, and you need to allow five to ten minutes at the end to check your answers. Check clock occasionally throughout the test.
 - b. What section will you start on?
7. Read **the directions carefully.** Even if you think you have seen the same instructions hundreds of times, read them anyway. This is the number one test taking error. Be sure you know what you are being asked to do. If you are not sure, ask the teacher!
8. **Answer the easiest questions first.** By answering the easiest questions first you will increase your confidence and trigger your memory. Once you get warmed up and calmed down, other information will come to you. **Go back to the more difficult ones.**
9. **Ignore the pace of your classmates.**
10. Don't let **lapses of memory** produce anxiety or fear; such lapses are normal.
11. An exam is **not a battlefield** for proving your point. Select the answer the professor supports.
12. **Check your answers.** Make sure you didn't make any careless mistakes. Make sure your answers are legible. Be careful about changing too many of your answers at this point. Change your answer only if you have rechecked it carefully. Very often, your first answer is the correct answer.
13. **Intelligent Guessing.** You probably know something about what is being asked.

Answering True-False Questions

1. **Absolutes** – Absolutes = no exceptions - include words such as *all, totally, nothing, always, never, completely, forever, every, none*, and so on. An absolute in a statement is a signal to think carefully about whether there are ever any exceptions to the statement. Ask yourself, “Are there ever any times when this would not be true”? These tend to be false.
2. **Qualifiers** are words indicating some exceptions exist, such as, *most, many, often, and usually*. They are often signals that a general sweeping statement is being made. They tend to be true.
3. **Judgments** are often false, unless you are being asked for your *opinion*. For example, for True-False question, *Flashcards are **useless** unless you use them with a partner* is a judgment and is false.
4. **One word can make the difference.** Focus on proper nouns, dates, and other key words or definitions. Everything might be correct except one word.
5. **If a question has two parts**, both must be true to answer true.
6. **Sometimes it helps to turn a true-false statement into a question.** If you can answer *yes*, it is true. If you can answer *no*, it is false.
7. **Don’t rely on patterns.** (T, T, F, F, T)
8. **Intelligent guessing**

Answering Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Read directions for special information**, i.e., answer 15 of the 20 questions.
2. **Read all of the responses before you answer.** Look for the best answer.
3. **Underline key words and phrases.**
4. When questions are keyed to a long reading passage, **read the questions first.**
5. If you are not sure of the answer, use the **process of elimination**. If you can definitively eliminate two of four answers you have increased your chances of answering correctly from 25% to 50%. (Translate similar choices into your own words, then analyze how the choices differ).
6. **All of the above.** Use caution – if you can clearly eliminate one, then this is not the correct answer. When in doubt these tend to be correct.
7. **If two are correct**, and *All of the above* is an option, choose it. (This is when you are unsure of the correct answer).
8. If two **choices are opposite**, one of them is probably correct.
9. If the question is in the form of an incomplete statement, **complete the statement yourself** before even looking at the choices. If your answer is similar to one of the choices, chances are that choice is correct.

10. The choice **differing most in length** from the others tends to be correct.
11. **Change original answer** only if you have a clear indication that another answer is correct.
12. When using a **separate answer sheet**, keep it to the right of the close to the test booklet; check frequently to see that you are answering in the correct space.

Taking Matching Tests

1. **Understand the directions.** Can you use an answer more than once? Are there more answers than questions
2. **Look at only one item at a time in one column.** Then look through the other column for the best answer.
3. Use the **process of elimination** when more than one answer seems to fit.
4. Lightly **cross out** any of the answers you have already chosen.
5. To **avoid being distracted**, cover up all but the item you are working on.
6. If you are stumped, you may want to work from right to left (**backward**) to jog your memory.

Fill in the Blank Questions

1. Look to see if any of the previous questions gave you a **clue** about the answer.
2. Decide if you are being asked for a **noun, verb, person, place, date, etc.** The answer should be grammatically correct.
3. If you are searching for a **vocabulary** term, think of the list of words you learned. Try to picture in your mind's eye the words with their definitions.
4. **Do not leave blanks.** Use a synonym if you cannot think of the exact word.

Review Exam Results

This will help you better prepare for the next test. Answer the following questions:

1. Why were points deducted from my answer?
2. How well did I answer lower and higher level questions?
3. What were the sources of my errors (notes, text, handouts)?

Adjust study plans for next time.

7/2008