

Test Taking Strategies

Preparation For A Successful Exam Day

Attend class regularly.

Avoid cramming - spread out study sessions days or weeks before the test; you will have less stress.

Organize your study area to reduce interference. Make sure that you have all the necessary materials before you begin studying. Some students study better if they have a regular spot which they can go to.

Summarize notes for studying. You should have approximately three to five pages of key terms, ideas, and review material. It is also a good idea to draw diagrams, charts, maps, etc. for visual aid.

Study from old tests if allowed by the professor.

Ask about test format - find out if it will be multiple choice, essay, true or false, or a combination of these so that you will know how to study best.

Form a study group - not just for the night before the exam, but one that meets throughout the semester.

Teach it to someone - if you can teach the material to someone then you can be sure that you know it.

Over learn - it is better if you over learn the material because then you will be able to recall it more quickly on exam day.

Study your outline - before the test use only your summary of notes to study so that you are not reading all your material again.

Relax for a little while before the exam.

Sleep - being rested is very important. You are likely to recall more of what you have learned if you are awake and alert.

Eat well. Watch you caffeine and junk food intake. Small, frequent high protein meals will help energize you.

A Test Taking Self-Analysis Key For Multiple Choice Tests

If you don't do well on multiple choice tests, it's important to find out why. Read the following statements and note which apply to you. It is important to identify the problem area before you can work to improve your test-taking skills.

1. Information Gap: I don't remember encountering this material at all or I glossed over it or did not have it in my notes.
2. Retention Gap: I studied this but could not call it up from memory.
3. Misinterpretation of Information: I incorrectly understood the information when I initially read the text or heard it in lecture.
4. Synthesis Gap: I did not make connections between pieces of information.
5. General Vocabulary Gap: I did not know the correct meaning or assumed an incorrect meaning of general vocabulary.
6. Course Specific Vocab Gap: I did not know or assumed an imprecise meaning of a term.
7. Inability to Decipher: I could not get past the grammatical structure of the question or response.
8. Jumping to Conclusions: I did not fully consider all the responses.
9. Rushed Response: I did not have time to consider the question carefully.
10. Over/Under Generalization: I eliminated too much or did not eliminate enough.
11. Misreading: I made decoding errors in reading the question or response.
12. Miskeying: I knew the correct answer but copied the wrong response on the answer sheet.
13. Memory Strategies Not Applied: I didn't consciously apply a variety of memory strategies to transfer information into long term memory.
14. Test Answers Not Checked: I didn't use extra test time to review my answers.

Strategies For Multiple Choice Tests

1. Narrow your choices down by eliminating obviously wrong answers which are almost identical.
2. Try to decide what the answer to the question is before you read all of the choices, but: Be sure to read all answers before selecting one. Sometimes two answers will be similar and only one will be correct.
3. Do not be afraid to change an answer if you feel strongly about it.

4. Do not be discouraged if you cannot answer a question. Leave it and go on. You may find the answer or clues to the answer in subsequent questions.
5. Beware of questions with "no", "not", and "none." These words easily change the meaning of questions.
6. If you have to guess:

Reject answers that use specific determiners such as: everyone, always, never, etc.
Look for grammatical inconsistencies which may help eliminate wrong answers.
Choose the longest, most precise answer.
Choose the answer that is in the middle.
Choose answers which use qualifying terms such as: often, most, etc.
Choose the answer which first caught your eye.

All of these hints work best when used together. It is important to note that nothing will help you do better than studying for a test.

Strategies For Essay Tests

1. Read all of the questions before beginning, making sure that you understand what the professor is asking. LOOK FOR KEY TERMS.
2. Begin by answering the easiest question. This will lessen frustration and build confidence.
3. Jot down ideas which immediately come to mind. Especially those which include specific vocabulary from the course.
4. Make a simple outline of what you will write about.
5. Be sure to keep track of time. *You should spend more time on questions which are worth more points.*
6. Try to write as neatly as possible and leave some space for added ideas or corrections.
7. Before turning your test in, read your answers a final time in order to check for grammatical errors and misspellings.

Words To Watch For in Essay Questions

The following words are commonly found in essay test questions. Understanding them is essential to success on such questions. If you want to do well on essay tests, then study this page thoroughly. Know these words backward and forward. To heighten your awareness of them, underline the words when you see them in a test question.

Analyze: Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.

Explain: Make an idea clear. Show logically how a concept is developed. Give the reasons for an event.

Compare:	Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences.
Illustrate:	Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.
Contrast:	Show differences. Set in opposition.
Interpret:	Comment upon, give examples, describe relationships. Explain the meaning. Describe, then evaluate.
Criticize:	Make judgements. Evaluate comparative worth. Criticism often involves analysis.
Outline:	Describe main ideas, characteristics, or events. (Does not necessarily mean "write a Roman numeral/letter outline.")
Define:	Give the meaning; usually a meaning specific to the course or subject. Determine the precise limits of the term to be defined. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually short.
Prove:	Support with facts (especially facts presented in class or in the test.)
Describe:	Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities, and parts.
Relate:	Show the connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.
Discuss:	Consider and debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Write about and conflict. Compare and contrast.
State:	Explain precisely.
Summarize:	Give a brief, condensed account. Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.
Enumerate:	List several ideas, aspects, events, things, qualities, reasons, etc.
Trace:	Show the order of events or progress of a subject or event.
Evaluate:	Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the evaluation.

If any of these terms are still unclear to you, go to your unabridged dictionary. Thorough knowledge of these words helps you give the teacher what he/she is requesting.

<http://www.southwestern.edu/academic/acserskillsteststr.html>

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