

## Study Strategies and Test Taking Tips HOW TO PREPARE FOR A TEST

### Learn about the test

- **The type of test**
  - Multiple choice, essay, short answer, matching, problem sets
- **The percent of the course grade it represents**
  - Are any of the tests dropped?
- **The material to be covered**
  - Cumulative or specific units, chapters or specific classes
- **Where the test material might be found**
  - Class notes, professor's Powerpoints, class reading list, outside sources

### Organize for the Test

- **Have all the relevant notes**
  - Print out professor's Powerpoints
  - Ask classmates for any notes you may have missed.
  - Is there a review sheet from the professor?
  - Do you need to make note cards?
- **Schedule meetings for help, clarification or review**
  - With the professor
  - With classmates
  - With the tutor, or check the ARC bulletin boards to find out if there is a study group

### Make a Study Schedule

- **Determine how much time you need**
  - **To avoid feeling overwhelmed, break down material into 1 hour study sessions.**
    - For example, if a chapter will take 2 hours to review and create notecards, block 1 hour to organize and create notecards and 1 hour to review the notecards sessions.
  - **Quality of time, not just quantity**
    - Consider your best time of day and best place (library, dorm, other distraction free space) to prepare for exams.

### On the Test Day

- **BE POSITIVE! You are taking the test. The test is not taking you.**
- **Take the first 5 minutes to make a plan**
  - Review the test: how many sections? How much is each section worth? Are you going to start from the beginning? With most difficult questions or easiest?
  - Estimate the time that you will have for each question according to the relative difficulty and point value of all questions so that you don't spend too much time on any one question.

### Test Taking Techniques For OBJECTIVE Tests

1. Do not spend too much time on any one question. Mark your best guess and move on, returning later. Identify doubtful answers by marks in the margin and recheck these as time permits.
2. Reread all questions containing negative wording such as “not” or “least.” Be especially alert for the use of “double” within a sentence.
3. Check for qualifying words such as “all-most-some-none,” “always-usually-seldom-never,” “best-worst,” “highest-lowest,” or “smallest- members of the series.
4. Be alert for multiple ideas or concepts within the same true-false statement. All parts of the statement must be true or the entire statement is false.
5. On matching exercises, work with only one column at a time. Match each item in that column against all items in the second column until you find a proper match, crossing out matches as you use them.

### For SUBJECTIVE (Essay) Tests

1. Read all the questions through rapidly, jot down beside each question any pertinent facts or ideas which occur to you. The best way to ensure that your answers do not overlap and are complete is to survey the entire test before answering any of the questions.
2. Before you begin writing, decide what kind of answer the question requires. Action verbs such as “illustrate” “list” “define” “compare” “trace” “explain” and “identify” require different approaches to organize your answer.
3. Answer the easiest question first and concentrate on answering one question at a time. Working on something you can handle is the surest way to reduce your test anxiety.
4. Before you start writing, make a brief, logical outline for your answer to insure good organization and prevent careless omissions.
5. Get down to business in your first paragraph and avoid long-winded introductions. Turn the question into your first sentence. Each supporting paragraph should have one major idea with supporting details.
6. As much as possible, include factual details and/or relevant examples to support your answer. These impress your instructor by giving evidence that you really do know what you are talking about.
7. Even though you are under pressure to write quickly, write as neatly as you can. If your handwriting is especially large, write on every other line in the exam book.
8. Leave ample space between your answers. You may need it for new ideas or additional details when you return later to reread what you have written.
9. If you encounter a question that you don’t think you can answer, leave it to be answered last, but don’t leave it unanswered. You may get partial credit for even a poor answer, especially if everyone else had trouble answering the same question.

**FINALLY...** Leave time to recheck all your answers for content accuracy, careless omissions and mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation. We all make mistakes when writing under pressure and you can often raise your grade by simply correcting an error or inserting an omitted fact.