



10 TIPS FOR TEST- TAKING

To help you students better understand and deal with their test anxiety, go over these ten basic tips for test-taking success.

1. Read directions carefully.
2. Scan the test to see how many and what types of questions lie ahead.
3. Work through the test by first answering all of the “easy questions.”
4. Skip a question if the answer doesn’t come quickly.
5. Go back later, and if possible, answer any questions that you may have skipped.
6. Read all possible answers for each question before choosing.
7. Record the answers in the correct place on the answer sheet.
8. For reading passages...skim the questions and accompanying answers first. Then scan the reading passages for the information you need to choose the correct answer.
9. Guess at the question if at least one answer can be eliminated as completely wrong. (This applies to tests that penalize for guessing. On the tests with no guessing penalty you should guess on *all* questions that stump you.)
10. Keep track of the time.

(Based on Marguerite Redencich)

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A SEMESTER EXAM

Semester exams generally serve two basic purposes. First of all, the tests attempt to measure how much learning has taken place and retained. Secondly, they provide students with the opportunity to step back from their learning in order to see the broad trends of thought by pulling ideas together and seeing relationships.

The ability to perform well on exams is dependent on the amount and quality of effort exerted throughout the semester, as well as the effort that goes into preparing for exams. The key to exam preparation is organization. If a student has been organized all semester, the time needed to prepare for exams will be reduced dramatically and the job made considerably easier.

STEP 1 *Organize your time well in advance of your exam.* Establish a specific time schedule for review and stick to it. The more time you allow yourself, the more thorough will be your learning. Begin reviewing a minimum of two weeks before the exam.

STEP 2 *Organize and review your notes.* It may be helpful to go over your notes with a colored pen to highlight and organize them. As you go over your notes you may want to:

- A. Put a box around important vocabulary words and construct a list of words that need refreshing.
- B. Make marginal notes that summarize material.
- C. Place a question mark next to material that isn't clear and needs to be reviewed.

STEP 3 *Organize your homework and tests.*

- A. Place your papers in order and correlate this information with your notes (a loose leaf notebook makes this easy).
- B. Review your homework and tests to focus on the areas that give you trouble. MAKE A LIST of trouble areas!
- C. Note the kinds of questions that were asked. Similar questions will probably be asked on the exam.
- D. Corrected homework and tests provide good sample exam questions that you can check yourself
- E. Highlight important questions, definitions, ideas -- add them to your list.

STEP 4 *Develop a broad outline that will summarize what you have learned in each course* in which you note the major topics learned and the key words and ideas related to the topics. To do this, review your assignments, textbooks, notes, and tests and build an outline.

STEP 5

Examine your lists and develop a study strategy for the trouble areas.

- A. Make flash cards
- B. Pre-test yourself
- C. Reread sections of your textbook and take notes
- D. FOCUS on problems and get help
- E. Make up questions and answer them
- F. Retake tests and correct them
- G. Review your outline remembering that you will need to summarize information because it should be in your head
- H. See your teacher

FACTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT LEARNING

- 1. **Meaningful** repetition encourages long-term learning
- 2. The key to memory is **organization** (gimmicks help too)
- 3. You can't remember everything. **Select** the important information to remember.
- 4. **Relate** new information to what is already known.

TEST-TAKING HINTS

- 1. Survey the entire test before you begin, noting the point value of questions.
- 2. Budget your time! Always wear a watch.
- 3. **Read directions carefully** to find out what you are to do and **how** you are to do it.
- 4. When answering objective items, read carefully. If you aren't sure of an answer, narrow the possibilities and then use your common sense and instincts. Remember first impulses are often right.
- 5. When answering essay questions, plan your answer by doing a rough outline. Be sure that you have answered all parts of the question. Use your knowledge of good writing: begin with a topic sentence, develop your ideas and write a conclusion. Support all generalizations with specific facts, examples and illustrations. Get to the point!!
- 6. Don't waste time on questions that leave you completely blank! Leave space and come back to them later.
- 7. Allow a few minutes to review your answers.

MORE TEST-TAKING HINTS:

The best preparation for any examination is effective day-to-day study that helps you with subject content, skills and the proper attitude. No amount of last minute review, cramming, or tutoring can replace this. Along with effective day-to-day preparation, there are other considerations of which you should be aware.

Keep in good physical health. Studies show a relationship between health and mental alertness.

Keep destructive feelings out of your test taking. The way you feel about a test or a subject affects the test results. Don't enter a test situation fighting the teacher, the school, or the world at large.

Don't come to a test situation filled with self-pity. Your fellow students are in the same boat.

Concentrate on the test itself, not on the possible score or after-effects.

Effective review requires organization. Keep your daily work organized in such a fashion that will enable you to begin study without having to separate subject matter or look for those lost notes. After you have surveyed the subject matter, decide what is most important and make sure that you have learned all of that material.

Make out a study schedule, especially before finals.

Study alone. There is some value in doing certain assignments with another student but once you have the information, "go it alone." Study sessions with others usually lead to irrelevant discussions. Having no TV or music on when studying for a test usually works best.

In multiple choice items, don't jump at the first response that seems correct; there may be a more correct response following. Of course, eliminate those responses that you know are incorrect.

Take all of the time that you are given. If you are finished before time is up, go over your test (especially those items that you are unsure of).

Get up early on test days so that you can eat slowly and get to school without the usual mad rush. You won't have a "pressured" feeling before the test starts.

Read directions carefully. Remember when you are under test pressure it is easy to misread or misunderstand directions.

Work rapidly and steadily.

Budget your test time.

Pay no attention to students who complete the test before you do or who seem to be far ahead of you.

Don't get panicky. If you get in a jam with a question, go on to the next item and come back later.

ESSAY TESTS:

Essay tests measure such things as --mastery of subject matter, ability to select details, facts, and ideas pertinent to the question. They also measure your ability to organize and express ideas clearly and accurately.

Read all of the questions first, check those that you feel well prepared to answer. Mark those that you know will be next to impossible for you.

Answer the easy questions first. This helps you to warm up and it will give you more time to work on the "tough" questions.

Read directions; underline key words such as compare, discuss, list, etc.

Organize and outline (briefly) your answer before you start writing the answer theme.

Allow time to check and reread your answers.

OBJECTIVE TESTS:

Look over entire test; find out the number of items; then decide on the amount of time that you have for each.

Find out if there is a penalty for unanswered items. It may be wiser to skip an item than to take a wild guess. Teachers differ on this, so know what policy each teacher uses.

Read instructions carefully; ask questions, if necessary.

Don't get bogged down on just one item: Mark the item and come back to it later.

Underline key words such as: always, only never, etc. Be careful on true-false items (only, always, and never mean that there are no exceptions; most, may, usually, etc., mean that there are exceptions)

ORGANIZATIONAL STUDY SKILLS

1. TESTS:

- A. Be sure of the time, place and type of test
- B. Obtain a schedule and keep it where you can easily find it
- C. Prepare/take

2. MAINTAIN PROPER MATERIALS:

- A. Keep a notebook for each class--or--
- B. A large notebook--and separate the classes by using color tabs
- C. Check for pencils, paper, and proper books each morning

3. ASSIGNMENT NOTEBOOK:

Obtain an assignment notebook or use a preprinted schedule of each class, and each day write the assignment for that class

4. STUDY SKILL STRATEGIES/DOING THE ASSIGNMENT:

- A. Use note-taking strategies
- B. Get overview- - -
Get started quickly
Study with pencil in hand
Cover difficult subjects first
Take a rest

5. CONDITIONS FOR STUDY:

- A. Table, chair and material available
- B. Schedule available (when the assignment is due)
- C. No distractions
- D. Allow enough time/same subjects - - same time

NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

Isn't it easier to remember something you have done than to remember something you have only heard about? Taking notes is doing something. It changes information you have only heard about into information you have worked with. The information becomes more a part of you. You not only hear the information, you also process it in your mind, organizing as you write it down. The information becomes much easier to remember and use.

Memory experts will tell you that the average person forgets at least half of what he learns within 24 hours of learning it. Taking notes helps to focus your attention on the most important information, information that you do not want to forget one day after learning it. Taking good notes can help you remember this information for weeks and even months afterward.

Students who have not studied the techniques of note-taking very often end up with one of the following kinds of notes:

1. Notes that are so disorganized or so poorly written they are almost impossible to read;
2. Notes which are so short and incomplete that they are of little use when studying for a test; or
3. Notes that are so full of details, illustrations, and examples that they are impossible to use efficiently.

Luckily, note-taking skills can be learned. You can turn your notes into a valuable study aid for reviewing what your teacher taught you last week, last month, or even last semester. The most important thing to know about note-taking is that it's not simply hearing and writing, it's listening, thinking, reacting, questioning, summarizing, organizing, listing, labeling, illustrating--and writing.

GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

The guidelines below will help you understand better what you must do to improve your note-taking skills. Read and follow each suggestion carefully.

1. Listen for and follow any special instructions, rules or guidelines your classroom teacher may have regarding notebooks and note-taking.
2. Place the date and the topic of each lecture or discussion at the top of each page of notes.
3. Write your notes in ink, on one side of the paper, and as neatly as time will allow; leave space in the margin for revising or adding to your notes later.
4. Begin taking notes immediately. Don't wait for something new or earthshaking before you write your first note; instead write a brief summary or a personal observation about the material being reviewed.
5. Remember, taking good notes does not mean writing down everything; it means summarizing the main ideas and listing only the important supporting details.
6. Write as concisely as you can. Leave out words that are not essential to the meaning; write your notes in phrases and thoughts rather than complete sentences
7. Use as many standard abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols (U.S., avg., in., ea., lb., vs., 2, 3, 4, 5, +, -, <, >, 1/3, w/o, etc.) as you can.
8. In addition, develop your own system of abbreviations or a personal shorthand method. Consider using abbreviations for words or phrases used frequently in a particular class. (Example: CW for Civil War in history class.)
9. Always copy down (or summarize) what the teacher puts on the board or an overhead projector. Pay special attention to charts and diagrams.
10. Draw simple illustrations, charts or diagrams in your notes whenever it would help make a point clearer.
11. Write a title or heading for each new topic covered in your notes whenever it would help make a point clearer.
12. Listen for transitions or signal words to help you organize your notes.
13. Use a special system of making your notes to emphasize important information (underline, star, check, indent).
14. Number all related ideas, items on in a list, and information presented in time sequence.
15. Label or indicate in some way information which is related by cause and effect, comparison or contrast, or some other special pattern or organization.

16. Circle those words or ideas you will need to ask about or look up later.
17. Do not let your notes sit until it is time to review for a test. Read over the notes you have taken within 24 hours and recopy, highlight, or summarize them as needed. (Consider using a colored marker or pen to highlight those notes that you feel are especially important.)
18. Share your note-taking techniques, abbreviations or special markings with others; you can then learn from what they share with you.
19. Consider switching to a new system of note-taking (outlining, mapping, two-column) if you are unhappy with your present method.

DOING THE ASSIGNMENT

There are various approaches to doing assignments effectively. The following have been tested and proved in practice. They should work for you.

Before starting the actual assignment, get an overview of what is expected. Know how much ground you must cover; know the skills that you should master and the facts and ideas that you should get out of the work.

Warm up and get started quickly. Your mind needs a short warm up period before it will operate smoothly and efficiently. Free your mind of irrelevant matters and shut off unpleasant, bothersome thoughts and problems. Think back about the material that was covered in class, go over class notes, study assignment directions and then begin directed work.

Study with a pencil in your hand so that you can take notes. If the book that you are using is your own, you may underline passages, write in the margin, raise written questions on the page so that you will not forget them- - some of the most effective outlining is done in the book- - do not get in the habit of underlining too much. As you cover a point or a page take your eyes off the book and in your own words, restate the important ideas. Check back to see if you are correct.

Go over your most difficult subjects first. Your mind is freshest and most receptive when you just start studying. After an hour or two, your mind will begin to tire. You will have sufficient energy left for the less demanding assignments.

Review and recheck your assignment as soon as you have finished it. A great deal of subject matter is forgotten almost immediately after the study period. Go over

your work, summarize it, cover formulas, ideas, words, etc, as soon as you have completed the work.

After you have studied for a period of time, stop. Get up and stretch, walk around a bit, get some fresh air, have a bite to eat, then go back to work. This kind of change is good for your muscles and mind.

Try to get all your assignments done before you go to bed. Don't put off the last assignment for your study period tomorrow. You will feel more secure and will sleep better if your mind is cleared of homework responsibilities. Because of the uncertainties of tomorrow, you may not find the time to do your deferred work

If you know that you have done your work well, you will become a better student. Self-confidence is a key to success, but don't fool yourself. Make sure that you have reasons to be confident. Show your assigned work to one of your parents or recite to someone in the family to get their evaluation. They may give you some hints that will help you.

Long-range assignments should be started as soon as possible after the assignment is given. It's easy to put these off until "later." Get started with an outline of your work while the directions are still fresh in your mind. Even though you feel that you have written all of the directions down properly, you may forget some details after a short period of time. Weekends are good for this kind of work; it gives you a chance to spend two and three hours on the assignment without having to shift to another subject.

YOUR CLASSES AND YOUR TEACHERS

Activities, committee meetings, sports events, parties, new friends: those are only part of what high school is about. Remember that the most important action in high school is in the classroom; it is the interaction between teachers and students.

Attend all your classes. Sometimes you may be forced to miss classes because of illness, but don't choose to miss class because you feel tired or hungry or lazy.

Come to class prepared. Bring your book and other necessary materials to class every day. It is difficult to be actively involved in the work of the day if you don't have your textbook or notebook with you.

Arrive for class on time. Most teachers like to begin their classes promptly when the bell rings. A late arrival, particularly a noisy one, is an annoying interruption. If you must be late, come in quietly and take your seat. Explain your tardiness to the teacher after class.

Pay attention in class. Ask your teacher to change your seat if you cannot see or hear clearly or if you are sitting near people who might distract you.

Don't daydream; instead become an active listener. Concentrate on listening, participating and taking notes.

Participate in class discussions. Even if you are shy, you should try to talk in class. Do not talk out of turn. Listen carefully to what everyone says so that when you are called on, you can make pertinent comments. Ask questions when you do not understand. Remember that the only foolish question is one you already know the answer to.

Take good notes. Find out who else in the class also takes good notes so that if you are absent or miss something, you will have a reliable source of information.

Turn in all assignments on time. Nothing aggravates a teacher more than the student who turns in late papers.

Get to know your teachers. Establish a two-way communication in which you share something of yourself as well as learn something about your teacher.

Seek help from your teachers whenever you do not understand an assignment or are confused about what you are studying, or just need some advice.

TWELVE TIPS FOR STUDYING AND MANAGING YOUR TIME

1. Plan a definite time for studying each day. This will discourage procrastination and prevent that pile-up of work.
2. Shorten your study time by knowing the purpose of each assignment, what to do, and how to do it before you leave class. Keep a record of all assignments in a special section of your notebook, or in a separate assignment notebook.
3. Predicting the amount of time needed for each assignment causes you to work harder so that you save time. By timing your assignments, you are more likely to concentrate and less likely to become bored.
4. Time yourself to see how long it takes you to read five pages of your textbook or a paperback. This will help you estimate the time needed to complete a reading assignment. Because a textbook is loaded with information, you may have to read some sections more than once. Allow time for reflecting on what you read, too.
5. Pay attention to charts and diagrams. They can be shortcuts to understanding.
6. When a reading assignment is made, you can expect to have a discussion of the material or a quiz in class. Take a little time to review just before class so that you are ready to participate.
7. Every time you study spend ten minutes in review of previous assignments. These “refresher shots” are the secret for long-term memory. This habit of frequent review also results in less time needed for studying for a major test.
8. Use daytime for study if possible. At night you are likely to be less efficient.
9. After studying about forty minutes, take a five-minute break. This refreshes your mind so that you can concentrate better and finish faster.
10. Setting a “stopping time” at night will encourage hard work in anticipation of being through by ten o’clock or whatever time you set. Sometimes you may even beat the clock. The increased impetus helps you concentrate.
11. Don’t cram for hours the night before a test. Instead, distribute your study in half-hour segments over a period of days.
12. Since learning is cumulative, new ideas must be incorporated with previous learning from lectures, readings, and lab experiments. You have to continuously make the connections and associations in your own mind. Putting it all together is easier if you schedule time daily to read, to think, to reflect, to review. Improved learning is the natural result of this approach to using your time.

THE STUDY SCHEDULE

High School students should develop a daily schedule. Here are some pointers:

Work your schedule around all your fixed responsibilities. In other words, schedule your “free time.”

Schedule your study periods at times when you normally work the best. Most students find after school and evenings to be most effective. A few students set aside an hour or so before school for study.

Generally, it’s best to study your most difficult subjects first. Your class work is still fresh in your mind and the first study period is considered to be the most effective. Study second-hardest subjects next, etc.

Allow ample time for study. An hour a day for each subject will take care of most assignments. You may need much more time for special projects, papers, report preparation, etc.

Plan to study the same subjects at the same time each day. This sounds like a dull way to live, but it will establish a pattern so that when you sit down to study you will fall into it naturally.

Make provisions in your weekly and daily scheduling for reports, papers, projects, etc. Plan this kind of work so that it doesn’t interfere with your daily assignments.

Go through your first schedule and “iron out” the rough spots. You may need to revise your plans until you have an effective schedule.

CONDITIONS FOR STUDY

Check out the usual physical necessities, such as: a chair, table, desk, or bookshelf. Keep your homework materials in a designated spot so that you need not spend time 'looking' for your materials (avoid studying on the bed or in an easy chair). Use ample light (the experts tell us to have a study light that shines over the left shoulder). The entire room should have some light so that when you turn away from your books, your eyes will not need to make radical adjustments). The temperature of the study room should be comfortable and not too warm.

Keep a study schedule calendar. Plot out long and short-range assignments; jot these assignments (when due) on your calendar as soon as possible. Make note of special events or days when study is impossible--plan ahead when you can.

No external distractions when you are studying. Turn off the video games, CD/MP3 player, and TV. Have an understanding with your family on phone calls directed to you--your friends are to call back at another time. The cell phone can distract from effective study habits.

Attempt to get rid of internal distractions. Internal distractions are constantly with us; we have family worries, personal problems, concerns about the present and future, health worries, etc. When you sit down to study, you must be able to put these aside. If these distractions persistently bother you, you may need help. Talk to your parents about your problems. Don't hesitate to see your counselor to talk about your problem. Your counselor may be able to refer you to someone who can help even more.

ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK OF _____

SUBJECT	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

SPECIAL NOTES: