



Test-Taking Skills

Taking a test is:

- a. challenging, but fun
- b. a waste of time
- c. enough to make me sick to my stomach
- d. all of the above
- e. none of the above

The answer is up to you. For many people tests can be fun; for others they can be upsetting, or make them anxious. However, since tests are a part of life, it makes sense to master the skills to do well on them.

Strategies for Test Taking:

Whenever you take a test, review and use these skills:

1. Get Organized

- If you have a test on Thursday, it is better to study a small amount on Monday through Wednesday than to try to cover it all on Wednesday night.
- Get a good night's sleep and eat a balanced meal before the test.
- Arrive in the classroom a minute or two early so you can take a few deep breaths to relax and get under control.
- Be sure to have all the materials you need to do well on the test (a calculator, extra pencils, etc.).
- Don't discuss the test with other students beforehand. You might get nervous or confused. You need to keep up your confidence.

2. Follow Directions

- Before you start a test, clear your mind of distracting thoughts and read *all* the directions carefully, both on the test and the board. Listen carefully to any additional directions provided by your instructor.
- If the directions on the test are unclear to you, ask your instructor.

3. Plan Your Time

- Look over the test and divide your time according to the number, type, and point value of the questions. If possible, plan time to review your answers before turning in your test.

4. Read Thoroughly

- Take time to read each question carefully. Circle or underline key words in the question to make sure you are responding to what is being asked.
- If you are not clear about what the question is asking for, ask your instructor to clarify or, if time is limited, come back to the question as time permits.

5. Don't Rush

- Don't worry if other students finish before you. Hurrying can lead to careless errors. Also, rushing can make you more tense than you should be.

6. Have a Panic Strategy

- When something unexpected happens or you are feeling too much pressure while you are taking a test, it can help to have a "panic strategy." Put down your pencil. Shut your eyes and take a deep breath. Then count to five as you exhale. Repeat this three times. You will feel better and should be able to continue your test with more confidence.

7. Check Your Work

- Use any time you have left over to check your work. Check for spelling, grammatical, or mathematical errors. Be sure you have answered all the questions, even if you have to guess. Be sure to put your name on the test.

Skills to Prepare for Tests:**1. Keep Up with Assignments**

- Keep up with day-to-day assignments.
- A good goal is to complete all reading assignments several days before you're tested on the materials.
- Summarize important points of a reading passage or chapter in a notebook. This will keep you from having to review the whole chapter later.
- Keep your class notes organized. Date them and keep them together by subject.
- Cross-reference your class notes with your reading notes to help acquire in-depth understanding of the subject.
- When you have questions about your homework or a class discussion, be sure to ask for help either from your instructor or a classmate.

2. Review Regularly

- Make reviewing part of your daily study schedule.
- Don't leave reviewing to the night before a test. The more often you see the same material, the more likely you will be to remember it with ease during a test.
- Ask yourself questions about the material you're studying and rehearse your answers.

3. Plan Ahead

- When your instructor announces there will be a quiz or test, write down the date, the type of test, and the material to be covered.
- Keep track of all your tests on a calendar, and mark the days with your plans to prepare for each test. For instance, if you have a test on Friday, you might mark your calendar to spend time reviewing materials for it beginning on Monday.
- Begin reviewing for tests several days in advance. This will give you plenty of time to review and ask questions.
- If you are having difficulties effectively planning ahead, review the steps from “Planning and Managing my Time,” “Setting Priorities,” or “Achieving My Goals.”

4. Identify What to Study

- To decide what you need to study, look over your notes, any handouts you got in class, and questions at the end of chapters. If you ask early enough, your instructor may give you some clues.

5. Study Efficiently

- Arrange to study when you feel most alert and energetic. Study in blocks of no more than an hour at a time. Take 10-minute breaks in between.
- Minimize your distractions: turn off your phone, computer, TV, and music.
- Review your class and textbook notes. Reread chapter summaries or skim the headings and subheadings.
- Focus on topics most likely to appear on the test. Ask yourself questions you would ask if you were the instructor, and answer them in your own words.
- When you feel like you’re almost ready, get together with a classmate or two and ask one another questions. It’s important that you study first and socialize later, so try to study with students who, like you, take it seriously.

6. Stay Calm

- Prepare well by knowing the material.
- Practice your test-taking skills.
- Avoid last-minute reviews.
- Don’t upset your normal routine by staying up too late, getting up too early, or not eating.

7. Review After the Test

- Review the test when it is returned to you. Be sure to look up the correct answers.
- If you are consistently missing the same types of questions, get help (skills lab, consult with instructor, classmates, etc.). Often these types of questions are building blocks that will be used again under more complicated conditions.