

Test Taking Guide

General Study Hints

Plan your study time well in advance. Last minute cramming is non-productive.

Several review sessions are better than one long one.

Be rested; have a good study area, free of distractions, take breaks, stay away from pep pills or caffeine laced items.

Group study is most beneficial only after individual study. Beware that group study does not drift into casual conversation.

Develop a 4 Day Study Plan

4 days ahead – Get ready to study, organize books, pencils, and notes. Complete any reading or assignments not done.

3 days ahead – Begin to study, 4 hours divided into 2-hour blocks, with breaks on the hour.

2 days ahead – Practice for essay exam, if applicable. Make a word outline from a practice essay. Focus your review on material you haven't completely learned.

The Day Before the Exam – Review cards, outlines, etc. to answer practice questions.

Day of the Exam – Do not study one to one and a half hours before the exam. Practice relaxation right before the exam.

Suggested Review Techniques

Compare lecture notes to the textbook or readings. Topics stressed in both are usually sure to be included on tests.

Try to recall main headings of chapters or try to remember sub-headings and main ideas of each.

Use 3 by 5 cards for review of terminology, formulas, and other brief facts.

Review reading and lecture notes by turning headings into questions and seeing how complete an answer you can give.

Try to make an outline of each section of a chapter. Write a few summary notes.

In sciences, be sure you include laboratory notes in study. Combine all notes on each topic as you study.

Try to formulate questions that might be asked and prepare answers.

Prepare study aid sheets for the most important material, coordinating reading and lecture notes.

You are well prepared if you can give a 15-minute summary without looking at your notes.

General Test Hints

Have a positive attitude. A test is an opportunity to show what you know.

Be sure you have a pen or pencil with you, if possible, wear a watch too.

Arrive at the exam 3 or 4 minutes ahead of time, so that you are settled before the test is handed out. Do not talk about the material just before the test.

Read the directions carefully.

Look quickly through the whole test and plan time allowance. Allow time for rechecking. There is not advantage to being the first one done, take all the time allowed.

Pay attention to the number of points per question. More points = more time.

Answer the questions you know first. Then go back to others.

Watch for qualifying cue words in the questions, such as: one, best, most, or generally.

Answer easiest questions first.

Be aware of the questions that might have information that answers other questions.

Be very sure before changing any answers.

Different Types of Questions:

Questions that require you to tell all that you know use terms such as: comment on, describe, discuss, review or state.

Questions that are looking for specific characteristics, or limited facts, use terms such as: compare = likenesses, contrast = differences, diagram = charts and tables, illustrate = concrete examples, prove = show why by evidence, explain = restate in your own words, define = tell meaning, qualities, and or characteristics.

Questions that are looking for important facts without elaborating ask you to: enumerate, list, tabulate, trace, summarize, or outline.

Questions that are asking for your supported opinion ask you to: evaluate, interpret, justify, select, choose, or criticize.

Essay Questions

Plan your answers. Jot down ideas, brief outline, organization, before you start writing.

Plan your time, based on points if possible. Set your watch where you can easily see it.

Make your answers specific and direct. The first sentence is the direct answer; the rest are support for that statement. Use technical terms wherever possible.

Be sure you are giving the information that was asked for.

Write legibly. Leave space between answers for possible additions.

Short Answer Questions

Generally, follow rules for essay questions.

These questions usually require two sentences. The first identifies the term and the second states why it is important.

Read questions carefully.

Recall specific facts.

Understand what is being asked.

Stick with the first answer.

Be brief and to the point.

Don't leave a question blank. Write in something, your intuition may be good.

Multiple Choice Questions

Try to supply the answer before reading the alternatives.

Cross out the choices you know are wrong.

Be careful with "all of the above" or "none of the above" type answers.

Read all the choices to be sure you have the best answer.

Refer choices directly back to the question for relationship.

Identify the key phrase in the question.

Matching Questions

Recall any related facts and look for associations.

Cross out the choices as you use them.

Pick the answer that is the most closely related.

True/False Questions

Read the whole statement; it must all be true.

The broader the statement, the greater chance that it is false.

Beware of the double negative and the change in thinking necessary.

Words that are usually a clue to a true statement: usually, probably, sometimes, most, or some.

Words that are usually a clue to a false statement: always, never, all, or none.

Follow-up after the Test

Try to determine why you got wrong what you did.

Is it an indication of poor preparation?

Did you not answer the questions asked?

Did you misread the directions?

Had you accurately predicted the type of questions that would be asked?

As soon after the test as possible, check on the material you were in doubt about.

Hopefully these tips will make preparing for exam day more orderly, predictable, and a lot less stressful for you so that test taking care before a part of the classroom learning experience that you face with confidence.