

Test Taking Strategies

- Write Down Key Facts
 - Before you even look at the test; write down key information you have studied
 - Formulas
 - Rules
 - Definitions
 - Recording this information makes forgetting less likely
- Begin with an Overview of the Exam
 - What kinds of questions will you be answering?
 - What type of thinking do they require?
 - How many questions are in each section?
 - What is the point value of each question?
 - Schedule the amount of time you spend on each question according to your answers above.
- Read Test Directions
 - Do the directions tell you to answer 3 of 5?
 - Do the directions tell you to provide a short answer or essay?
- Work from Easy to Hard
 - Answer what you know first – this leaves you time for the more difficult questions
- Watch the Clock
 - Keep track of how much time is left and how you are progressing
 - Wear a watch – sometimes a classroom may not have a clock that is easily visible
 - You may want to plan your time on a scrap piece of paper especially if you have several essays to write
- Use Critical Thinking to Avoid Errors
 - Recall facts, procedures, rules and formulas
 - Think about similarities – if you don't know the answer to a question, look through your test and see if it is similar to another question you do know
 - Note differences – items that seem different from the material you studied may lead you to answers you can eliminate
 - Think through cause and effects – think through your answer and see if it makes sense in regards to the question that is being asked
 - Support ideas with examples – in essay questions, ALWAYS support your answer with examples whenever possible

Mastering Different Types of Test Questions

- Multiple Choice Questions
 - Carefully read the directions
 - Reach each Question thoroughly
 - Underline Key Words and Phrases
 - Pay Attention to Words that could Throw you off – ex. “Which of the following is NOT”
 - If you don’t know the answer, eliminate those answer you know or suspect are wrong
 - Make sure you read every word of the answer
 - When questions are related to a reading passage given in the text, read the questions FIRST
- True/False Questions
 - Read Carefully to Evaluate what they truly say
 - IF you are stumped, guess –it’s a 50/50 shot; don’t leave it blank!
 - Look for qualifiers
 - All, Only and Always usually make a statement false
 - Generally, Often, Usually and Sometimes can turn a statement that is true into one that is false or vice versa
- Matching Questions
 - Make sure you understand the directions – can each answer be used more than once?
 - Work from the column with the longest entries
 - Start with the matches you know
 - Finally, tackle the matches you are not sure of
- Fill in the blank questions
 - Be logical – after you insert your answer, read the entire sentence to make sure it makes sense
 - Note the length and number of blanks – if two blanks appear right after one another, the instructor is probably looking for a two word answer
 - Pay attention to how blanks are separated – if there is more than one blank in the sentence and the blanks are widely separated, then treat each as a separate answer
 - Think out of the box – if you can think of more than one correct answer, then put them both down
 - Make a guess – use qualifiers like may, sometimes and often to increase the chance that your answer is at least partially correct
- Essay Questions
 - Start by reading the questions – decide which to tackle first; some essay questions may contain more than one part
 - Watch for action verbs – certain verbs can help you figure out how to think
 - Plan your essay – brainstorm ideas and examples; create an informal outline of what you plan to say so you don’t leave anything out and have an organized answer
 - Draft your essay – start with a thesis statement then support it in your body paragraphs (each paragraph should be a point from your outline); wrap it up with a short pointed conclusion

- Revise your essay – make sure you have answered the question completely and have included all of your points; look for ideas you have left out, ideas you didn't support with examples or paragraphs with confusing sentences
- Edit your essay – check for mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage; no matter your topic, being technically correct in your writing makes your work more impressive

Adapted from: Carter, Bishop, and Sarah Lyman Kravits. Keys to Success in College, Career and Life. 4th ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003.