

EFFECTIVE TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

EARLY PREPARATION

- Begin preparing early.
- Simulate test conditions – solve unassigned homework problems and see if you can finish them in the time allotted for the exam.
- Form a study group. If you need help identifying peers for this sort of thing, ask your professor.
- Visit PARC to schedule an appointment with a tutor or success coach if there is information you do not understand.
- Contact the professor with any questions regarding the material.

BEFORE THE TEST

- Eat a moderate breakfast.
- Conclude studying and do something relaxing one hour prior to the test.
- Arrive early and allow yourself time to get settled prior to the start of the exam.
- Select a seat away from doors, windows, or anything else distracting.
- Don't review with your friends just prior to the test or listen to any cramming going on around you.

DURING THE TEST

- Read the directions and make sure you understand them. When in doubt – ask.
- Work the easiest portion first.
- Know the scoring policy. Are you penalizing yourself for guessing?
- Attempt to answer each question.
- Keep an eye on the time and pace yourself.
- Perform a “brain dump”. At the start of the test write down on a sheet of paper any facts or key information that you are afraid you might forget. This may help you feel less anxious about forgetting important content.
- Make an effort to relax periodically during the test. Take several deep breaths. Use positive self-talk.
- Eat a piece of peppermint candy if you get an upset stomach.
- Use leftover time to check answers.

Check out these topics also available in this series.

[Five Day Test Preparation](#)

[Self Help Study Strategies and Tips](#)

[Effective Note Taking Strategies](#)

Major in you.

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MATCHING TESTS

- Read both columns carefully before matching any items.
- Match the items you are sure of first.
- Cross out the choices once they have been used (unless answer can be used more than once).

TRUE/FALSE TESTS

- Answer the questions that are most obvious to you first.
- Every part of a “true” statement must be true. If any part of the sentence is false, then the whole sentence is false even though it may have some true parts.
- Words like *No*, *Never*, *None*, *Always*, and *Entirely* imply the statement must be true 100% of the time and often indicate false answers.
- Words like *Sometimes*, *Often*, *Frequently*, *Ordinarily*, and *Generally* open up possibilities of making accurate statements. They are more likely to reflect reality and usually indicate true answers.

MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS

- Read the question and develop the answer in your mind before you read the options. Look for a response that comes closest to your anticipated answer.
- Force yourself to read each possible choice before selecting an answer. Remember, some choices appear correct at first glance but turn out to be wrong when you take a closer look.
- Eliminate the options that are clearly incorrect, and compare the remaining options.
- Look for clue words. Words like *Never*, *Always*, *Every*, or *None* are rarely in the correct option. Words like *Usually*, *Often*, and *Rarely* are more regularly found in the correct choices.
- Don't get sidetracked looking for patterns to the answers.

THE ESSAY EXAM

- Read the directions carefully and do exactly what is asked. If the question requires you to list or enumerate such as “List the six major types of transportation”, write the numbers 1 through 6 with a type of transportation after each number.
- Style and appearance count. Be respectful and do not use slang. Write in complete sentences. Proofread for correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Outline your answer before you write it. Organize your thoughts into a brief outline on scrap paper before you begin to write.
- Underline key terms before you begin to write.

Keywords in essay prompts and what they mean.

Compare	List the similarities between things
Contrast	Note the differences between things
Criticize	State your opinion and stress the weakness
Define	Clearly state the meaning; give examples
Explain	Show cause and effect
Review	Give an overview with a summary
Summarize	Retell the main points
List	Write a series of numbered items
Diagram	Make a drawing that demonstrates relationships

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