



Taking Tests: General Tips

Tests measure how you are doing in a course. Usually test scores are the key determinants of your course grade. Doing well on tests requires test-taking skills, a purposeful positive attitude, strategic thinking and planning, and, naturally, a solid grasp of the course content. This handout contains tips that apply to all types of tests; additional tips are available for problem solving tests, objective tests, and essay tests.

Preparing for Tests:

1. Familiarize yourself with the test. Ask the professor how long it will be and what kind of questions will be on it. Ask your instructor which concepts are most important, which chapters to focus on, and what you will have to do on the test. Also ask for some sample test questions, and whether there is a copy of a similar test on file in a library. Look over the tests you have already taken in the course to predict what you will need to prepare for. Your aim is to determine both the content of the questions and the type of memory and intellectual skills you will be asked to use. Examples of these skills include:
 - Remembering specific facts, details, terms and definitions.
 - Comparing, contrasting, and otherwise interpreting meaning in the information studies.
 - Applying principles and theories to solve problems (that may not have been covered explicitly in the course.)
 - Predicting possible outcomes given a set of variables.
 - Evaluating the usefulness of certain ideas, concepts, or methods for a given situation.
2. Review all the work to be done and schedule time to do it. On the basis of your familiarity with the test, make a list of all the tasks you must complete to prepare for it. Assign priorities to your study tasks according to the topics you expect to be most

7. Do not panic if you see a question you did not anticipate. Use everything you know to analyze the question and create a logical answer. Go for partial credit when you know you cannot get all the points: If you have studied, you are bound to know something.
8. Read the question as is. Avoid overanalyzing or oversimplifying, or you will end up answering a question that exists only in your mind. Answer the question the testmaker intended: interpret the test within the scope of the course.

Analyzing Returned Tests:

1. If you receive your test back to keep, rework your errors to find out why the correct answer was correct.
2. If you do not receive your test back, visit your instructor's office to take a look at your answer sheet and the questions you missed.
3. Look for the origin of each question--text, notes, labs, supplementary reading, etc.
4. Identify the reason you missed questions. Did you fail to read it correctly? Did you fail to prepare for it? Was the test at a more difficult level than you prepared for? Did you run out of time?
5. Check the level of detail and skill of the test. Were most of the questions over precise details and facts or were they over main ideas and principles? Did the questions come straight from the text or did the testmaker expect you to make sophisticated transformations and analyses?
6. Did you have any problems with anxiety or blocking during the test?