

Test Taking & Managing Test Anxiety



Provided by:
Student Development Office
UNT Dallas Campus
8915 South Hampton Road
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We Remember

20% of what we hear

50% of what we see & hear

70% of what we see, hear & do

90% of what we see, hear, do & tell

Test Taking Managing Test Anxiety

1. Make sure you know in advance the location and time of the test, as well as the materials you should bring. Examples of materials you may be required to bring are scantrons, blue books, pencils, pens, and an official I.D. Obtain these materials in advance so as to prevent additional stress on the day of the exam.
2. Your best test taking strategy is to be in constant preparation throughout the semester. Attend every class session and take careful notes. Read the assigned material prior to class and outline important information. Complete all of the required assignments. During the week before an exam, organize all of your notes, outlines, and study guides and systematically review all of the material.
3. Stop studying 1 hour before the exam and relax. Last minute cramming will not be very effective.
4. When you arrive at the testing area, do not pay attention to what your classmates say about the exam. Discussing the test with your classmates may confuse you or raise your anxiety level. Do not get caught in a pre-test frenzy.
5. Focus on one question at a time.
6. Answer or abandon questions as you go in an unhurried pace. Try to not get stuck on one question for a long time. If you do not know the answer, move on and come back after you are done. The more you think about other questions, the more you will begin to remember.
7. Try not to let the physical and psychological effects of anxiety affect your performance on the exam. Take a deep breath and relax.
8. Pay attention to what you know, rather than on how much more you should have studied. Criticizing yourself will only waste time and lower your grade.
9. Remember that this is “a” test, not “the” test.

Test Taking Self-Assessment

Read the following statements and rate yourself as you currently are (not how you would like to be) when preparing for and taking tests. Try to be as honest as possible.

1 = Not at all
2 = Sometimes
3 = Always

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | I am well prepared for tests. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | I am flexible in my approach to studying for tests and use different systems depending on the format of the test. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | I prepare for class throughout the semester by completing assigned readings and homework. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | I am well rested before an exam. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | I am rarely anxious during tests. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | When studying for an exam, I learn more than what is expected. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | I begin studying 5 to 7 days before an exam so I do not have to cram the night before. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Before I answer any test questions, I read the test instructions. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | If I have trouble answering an exam question, I mark it and come back to it later. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | I try to answer the easiest test questions first before moving on to the more challenging ones. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | When taking an exam, I generally adopt a time budget at the beginning so I know how much time to spend on each section of the test. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | If I perform poorly on an exam, I speak with the instructor to find out how I can improve on the next test. |

Look at your responses. Pay attention to items on which you rated yourself with a “3” because these are your strengths. Next, consider the items rated “1” or “2.” Some of these represent areas to focus on.

*adapted from: Petrie, T., Landry, L. P., & Edwards, K. B. (1998). Achieving personal and academic success. Denton, Texas; RonJon Publishing, Inc.

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Test Taking

As you begin taking your test...

1. Prepare yourself by arriving early so that you can do a breathing or relaxation exercise.
2. Pay attention to verbal directions given as the test is distributed. Ask about the general rules of the exam such as the procedure for asking questions, materials allowed in the room, etc.
3. Scan the entire test immediately and evaluate the importance of each section by noting how many points each part of the test is worth.
4. Estimate how much time you will need for each section and budget your time.
5. Read the instructions carefully (Sometimes you will be asked to answer 2 out of 3 questions).

General Test Taking Strategies

1. Write down specific formulas or concepts that you think you may forget.
2. Answer the easiest, shortest questions first. Usually answer questions in the following order: multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank, short answer, and essay questions.
3. When you get stuck on a difficult question, try to remember other information about the topic.
4. Look for answers in other test questions. A term, name, date, or other fact that escapes you might appear in the test itself.

Test Taking Tips for Multiple Choice Questions

Preparing for multiple-choice exams requires purposeful notes, well-reviewed texts, and active daily learning. Multiple-choice exams may require comprehensive knowledge and understanding of details from the course as well as overarching themes and ideas.

1. Answer each question in your mind before you consider the choices given in the exam. If you can recall the answer before looking at the choices, you can reduce the possibility of getting confused.
2. Be skeptical of answer choices that use absolute words, such as always, never, and only.
3. Skip over questions that puzzle you. Mark them and come back to them after you have finished the rest of the questions. You may actually find the answer in another question!
4. Watch out for the “all of the above” option. Sometimes these are used as decoys. If you are sure that two out of the other three options are correct, then you should pick “all of the above.”
5. Your first answer is almost always the correct one. You should only change your answer if you find that you misread the question or you have found the correct answer further on in the exam.
6. After you have answered all the questions that you know, try to answer the difficult questions. For questions that puzzle you:
 - a. Eliminate those that are clearly wrong.
 - b. Usually one answer is far-fetched, another unlikely and a third “maybe.”
 - c. Eliminate as many choices as you can so that you can increase the odds and then make the best guess possible.
 - d. Check to see if the answer is grammatically correct. Does it sound right?
7. Remember to answer all multiple choice questions. You have a 25% chance of guessing correctly!

Test Taking Tips for True-False Questions

1. Answer true-false questions carefully. One word can make a seemingly true statement false.
2. If any part of the true-false statement is false, the statement is false.
3. Absolute qualifiers such as “always” or “never” generally indicate a false statement.
4. Qualifiers may overstate a true-false statement, understate it, or make it just right.
Look for qualifier sets like:
 - a. all, most, some, none
 - b. always, usually, sometimes, never
 - c. great, much, little, no
 - d. more, equal, less
 - e. good, bad
 - f. is, is not

Test Taking Tips for Essay Questions

1. Follow the instructions given.
2. Create a brief, informal outline to help you organize your thoughts and your essay. The difference between a good essay answer and a poor one is often a matter of organization.
3. Provide evidence to support your ideas. Refrain from making assertions without providing proof.
4. Always include a thesis statement in your essay. Since essay exams tell you what to focus on, it should be easy to know how to begin your thesis—with the basic answer to the question. Your thesis statement should clearly and concisely answer the question.
5. In the remainder of your essay, you should spend time supporting your thesis or answer. Support your thesis by providing detailed evidence from your reading, class notes, and/or research on the topic and by demonstrating how your evidence supports your ideas.
6. Always include as much information as is relevant to the question. Even if you only know part of the answer, answer that part. Do not leave questions blank. Most professors give partial credit for essay questions.
7. Answer the given question(s). Do not include irrelevant material just to prove that you have studied. Only include information relevant to the given prompt.
8. Avoid giving answers that are exclusively abstract and vague. Providing details to support your general points shows the professor that you have studied the material.
9. Write legibly. Sloppy handwriting could lower your grade. If your instructor cannot read your answer, he or she cannot give you credit for your answer.

Making the Most of Your Mind: Reducing Test Anxiety by Using Mental Visualization

Test anxiety is a common problem among college students. Anxiety symptoms can interfere with your performance on an exam. Mental visualization can help you prepare your mind and body for an exam. This technique is typically used by athletes but can also be helpful for students. Use the following relaxation exercise to help reduce test anxiety:

Sit up in a chair, legs and arms uncrossed. Close your eyes, let go of all thoughts, and focus on your breathing for a minute or two.

Then tell yourself to relax, beginning with your feet. Relax your toes, your feet, and your ankles. Move up to your calves and thighs. Relax your buttocks. Tell yourself to relax the muscles of your lower back, abdomen, and chest. Relax your hands, arms, and shoulders. Relax your neck, jaw, face, and scalp.

When you are completely relaxed, imagine yourself in an exam room. It's the day of the test. See the test being handed out. Hear the other students shuffle in their seats. Feel the desk, the pencil in your hand and the exam in front of you. See yourself looking over the exam calmly and confidently.

Create an image of yourself previewing the exam, budgeting your time, and beginning the test. You feel confident as you answer the questions. Stay with this image for a few minutes.

See yourself complete the test and hand it in, confident of your grade.

Finally, imagine receiving the test grade.

It is an "A."

*adapted from: Ellis, D. B. (1985). Becoming a master student. Rapid City, SD: College Survival, Inc.

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