

Test Taking Skills

Keys to Testing Success

Test Taking Skills

Read Directions and Questions Carefully

1. Read the questions as they are, not as you would like them to be.
2. Make sure you understand the kinds of answers expected, and their scoring.
3. Pay attention to the wording of each question.
4. *Contrast* on an essay question has a different meaning from *evaluate*, *compare* or *develop*.
5. Ask your instructor for clarification if you do not understand.

Answer Easy Questions First

ESSAY EXAMS:

1. Quickly order the questions from easiest to hardest, taking the scoring into account.
2. Answer the questions in that order.

OBJECTIVE TESTS:

1. First answer questions that you know.
2. Mark questions that you are not certain of, and come back later.
3. Avoid wasting time on questions you don't know.

Pay Attention to the Wording of Questions

1. Watch for qualifiers such as all, must, some, great, much, little, and no.
2. Examine all questions containing negative wording such as not and the prefix un-.
3. In true-false statements, all segments of the question must be true for the entire question to be true.
 - a. Look for multiple ideas or concepts.
 - b. Watch for the use of inserted names, dates, places or other details which could make a statement inaccurate.

Plan Your Use of Time on an Essay Exam

1. Look over the entire test before you start to answer any questions.
 - a. List key phrases which come immediately to mind as you read.
2. Have a watch with you.
 - a. Budget your time for various sections/answers, according to their importance.
 - b. Allow a few minutes for a final proofreading.
3. Make sure you are working rapidly enough to answer all the questions with reasonable assurance of accuracy.
 - a. Guess at questions you are unsure of as long as there is no penalty for guessing.

Know How Much You Can Write

1. Know how many paragraphs you can write in the time you've allotted for each question.
2. Decide what kind of answer the question requires before you begin writing.
3. Action verbs such as trace, compare, and define all require different approaches to answering.
4. Jot down a brief outline before responding to a question.
5. Remember to include:
 - a. An opening paragraph, stating the main idea to be discussed;
 - b. A number of intermediate paragraphs, depending on the time allotted and your speed in writing;
 - c. A concluding paragraph to show how you have dealt with the question in a significant manner.
6. Avoid long-winded introductions, and get down to business in your first paragraph.
7. Work toward earning the most points in the shortest amount of time.

Choose the Best Possible Answer

1. Be aware that the question may have a best answer, not necessarily a correct answer.
 - a. Work toward selecting the best answer from those which are available.
2. Read a test question and think of your own answer first, then look for it in the example given.
3. If your answer is not in the example, read the question again and substitute each different answer.
4. Try to eliminate all the answers but two, and you will have a true-false test.
5. Be cautious about changing your original answer without good reason.

Answer Every Question and Write Legibly

1. Attempt to at least partially answer difficult questions.
2. To help you recall information you may visualize the place where you prepared for the test or how you took your notes.
3. You will want your test grader to understand every word you have written because the grader won't give a student the benefit of a doubt on illegible answers.

Formulate a Plan of Attack

1. You should find out in most cases what kind of exam to expect and make preparation accordingly.
2. As soon as you receive the exam, survey it to find out:
 - a. How many different kinds of questions are being used?
 - b. What do the directions indicate?
3. Plan your time.
4. Recognize key words in each question.
5. Save a few minutes at the end of the test period to proofread your work.
6. Consistently modify your game plan according to the subject matter, the instructor and the type of test.

Go over the whole test one more time

Proofread. Don't let careless errors lower your grade. Make sure each answer is properly identified and in the right place. Don't change an answer unless you are completely convinced it is wrong.