TEST-TAKING TIPS
How To Be Prepared For Tests and Exams
Purchase all necessary materials like pencils, scantrons, answer sheets, and bluebook or green books. Don't wait until the last minute, the time the test starts, to go buy required materials. This could take away from the amount of time you have for the test itself.

Attend review sessions. Ask about the test itself (will it be an essay test or a multiple choice or true false test?) Will it be timed or will you have all the time you need? Is it open book or are notes not allowed?

BEFORE THE TEST
Before the Test

Arrive five or ten minutes early (coming late only adds to stress you may feel and also cuts into your time allowed for the test)

Have confidence in your abilities (avoid negative thoughts; keep a positive attitude)
Before the Test

Get enough sleep the night before and don’t go to the test hungry or thirsty. You want to feel your best and you don’t want the distraction of a growling stomach. It is wise to use the rest room before tests, too.

The most important tip is to be prepared for the test. A week before the test, start studying and create a schedule you can stick to. Many times, test anxiety is a result of feeling unprepared and overwhelmed. You have some control over this if you make sure you devote enough time to studying the material.
Preview the test. Look over the test to see how long it is, how many questions are in each section, and how questions are weighed. This is important in helping you pace yourself. You don’t want to be surprised at the end with a 50 point essay question when you have just five minutes left. Previewing the test helps you understand what sections are crucial to complete.
Read the directions carefully.

Make sure you understand what is being asked; it is a good idea to read the directions several times. If you have questions, you should ask your instructor for clarification.

Keep an eye on the clock and work at a steady pace.

Concentrate. Block out distractions.

Ignore students who leave early. These students do not necessarily make high grades. Many of these students may be satisfied with a C in the course or may realize they are failing so don’t take time to work carefully.
TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

Here are a few tips about T/F test questions. Notice the wording of the questions. Watch out for qualifying words—no, never, not, and cannot. Also note prefixes such as in, dis, un.

- Negative and Double Negative statements can be confusing and require careful reading. Note words such as no, none, never, not, and cannot.
- Two negatives cancel each other out.
- Read statements that have two parts very carefully. Remember that both parts have to be true. If one part is true and the other part false, then mark False.
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With True/False tests, you have a 50% chance of getting it right. If you don’t know the answer, you can follow these tips:

- Absolute statements usually are false.

  Few things are always true so statements with words like always, all, never, or none tend to be false.

- Statements that contain unfamiliar terms or facts often are false. If you have studied the material thoroughly, you would most likely recognize the information.

- It is better to guess True rather than False because it is more difficult to create false statements. Many exams have more True statements instead of False.
Look through both lists first to get an overview of the material. What is the organization? Are you matching dates with events? Terms with definitions? People with what they are known for?

Answer the items you know, eliminating those items.

Be careful not to select the first seemingly correct response. A later answer may be more correct.

If the first column has short words and phrases but the second has longer definitions or descriptions, you can save time by reverse matching, looking for words in column 1 that fit column 2.
Short answer tests ask you to compose a brief response, often in a list or sentence. For example, you may be asked to “list three factors that led to the Great Depression.”

Tips:

--Plan what you will say before starting to write.

--Pay attention to the amount of space provided, using it as a clue as to how much you should write (and note if this space varies).
- Gatsby stares at the _____light at the end of Daisy’s dock. (need an adjective).
- Tom’s girlfriend is named __________. (need a noun, a name).

Fill-In-The-Blank Tests

This type of test asks you to fill in a word or phrase within a sentence.

- Look for key words in the sentence and identify the subject matter.
- What type of information is required? Name? Date? Place? New term?
- Note the grammatical structure of the sentence as a clue to which type of word will be correct.
Read all choices before selecting your answer. Even if you think you have found the answer, the last choice could be the “best” answer.

If you find combination choices (a and b; a, b, and c), *take your time* to read carefully. Treat each answer as a True and False statement. If you find more than one true statement, mark the response containing all the true statements.

Use logic and common sense. Sometimes you can reason and eliminate some of the possible answers.

Read carefully any items that are very similar. Try to paraphrase them into your own words and try to see how they differ. This could help you to select the correct answer.
MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS

Pay attention to qualifying words.

Selections containing *best, always, all, no, entirely, completely* suggest the statement is true without exception.

Words such as *no, never, none, and worst* suggest the statement is never true without exception.
STANDARDIZED TESTS

- Most of these tests are timed so you need to work at a brisk pace.
- Don’t worry if you don’t finish; many are designed to make it unlikely that you finish.
- Don’t expect 100% correct answers.
- Ask about a penalty for guessing. If there is not one, you can use the last twenty seconds to randomly fill in other questions. Odds are you will get one right for every four you guess.
Read the question carefully. This is crucial. You must make sure you address the writing prompt. Pay particular attention to the verbs or key words. What are you being asked to do? Are you Comparing? Discuss? Define? Summarizing? Justifying? Some require knowledge and comprehension; some require you to demonstrate higher level thinking skills.

Read all directions carefully. Directions will tell you how many essays to write, how to organize them, and they may indicate the requirements for length.

Discuss (define the issue and elaborate on advantages and disadvantages)
Define (state the meaning so that the term is understood and use examples)
Illustrate (provide examples)
Compare (list similarities)
Contrast (note the differences)
Explain (show cause and effect and give reasons)
Evaluate (state positive and negative views and make a judgment)
Criticize (state your opinion and stress the weaknesses)
Justify (give proof or reasons to support an opinion)
Trace (move sequentially from one event to another)
Prove (use facts as evidence in support of an opinion)
Summarize (retell the main points)
Descriptive (state the characteristics so that the image is vivid)
Trace (move sequentially from one event to another)
Prove (use facts as evidence in support of an opinion)
Criticize (state your opinion and stress the weaknesses)
Justify (give proof or reasons to support an opinion)
Trace (move sequentially from one event to another)
Prove (use facts as evidence in support of an opinion)
ESSAY EXAMS

- Take some time to plan your essay. Jot down a small outline or at least a list of your main points before starting. Presenting an organized essay generally will help you get a higher grade.

- Use correct paragraph and essay structure.
- Have a thesis statement.
- Have your main points clearly identified.
- Support your points with adequate explanation (facts, examples, logical reasoning, personal experience, statistics, analogies, description).
ESSAY EXAMS

- Make your essay readable. Use ink (it generally is easier to read). Use clean paper or a bluebook or green book if required.
- Number pages and place name on each.

- Last, take time at the end to proofread. Make necessary corrections for spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. Draw a neat line through anything you want to omit (it doesn’t hurt to write also OMIT beside it or in the margin).
AFTER THE TEST

How well did you prepare?

Did you study the necessary material? Were you alert? Did you forget to study certain areas?

How was the test itself?

Was it what you expected? Did the professor describe it accurately for you? Use this experience to prepare for upcoming tests.
Analyze How You Did On the Test

- Look at the test if it is returned to you. Note the ones you missed. Did you miss the items because you did not study that material? Or did you miss the item because of careless reading?

- Or did you miss the item because you didn’t have time to finish the test. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses can help you better prepare for other tests.
If you have had an essay exam, look at an A paper. The A essay can help you see where you need to improve.
DEALING WITH TEST ANXIETY

Test situations

1. Be familiar with the building and room in which the test is given. Go in the room and sit when it is empty. You can visualize yourself there taking a test.

2. Take advantage of any practice or review tests. Pretend you are in a real test situation and work on them in similar testing conditions. You can also develop your own practice tests.
3. Practice working within the time constraints that you will have in upcoming tests.

4. Purchase any review books or workbooks that accompany your text. Take advantage of online companion sites that may give practice tests or quizzes.
CONTROL NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

1. Don’t allow yourself to harbor negative thoughts before and during the test. Tell yourself that you have worked hard, that you have studied hard, that you can pass the test.
2. Make sure you have eaten and visited the restroom before the test. Eliminating these distractions can help you concentrate. Some students find taking a walk or listening to music before the test can help alleviate test anxiety.

3. It sometimes helps to answer the easy questions first so that you build your confidence. This can help you become more calm.
REFERENCES


HELPFUL LINK:

Saddleback College LearningExpress Library

The LearningExpress Library's resources will help you succeed. Each of the Learning Centers offers the practice tests, exercises, skill-building courses, eBooks, and information you need to achieve the results you want—at school, at work, or in life.

http://www.learnatest.com/LEL/index.cfm

- Also, visit the Saddleback College Reading Lab for additional information.