

General Tips for Taking Tests

Come prepared. Arrive early, but not too early.

- Bring all the materials you will need, such as pencils, pens, a calculator, etc.
- Don't talk to other students before a test about possible test questions; anxiety is contagious.

Briefly preview the test.

- Spend 10% of your test time reading through the test carefully, marking key terms and deciding how to budget your time.

Jot down important formulas, memory aids, equations, facts or other material you know you'll need, but may forget later.

- Use the margin or back of the test. If you use a separate sheet of paper, it may appear that you are cheating.
- This will "free up" your mind to answer the test questions.

Always read the directions and test questions thoroughly.

- You may have a good answer, but if it doesn't answer the professor's question, then you won't get credit for it.
- If the question or directions are confusing, ask for clarification.

Answer the test questions in a strategic order.

- You may choose to do the easy questions first if you are anxious.
- Notice the point values; be sure to answer the questions with the highest point values.

Reserve 10% of your test time for review.

- Resist the urge to leave as soon as you have completed all test questions.
- Make sure you have answered all the questions. Don't leave any blank (if you aren't penalized for guessing).
- Check for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and careless mistakes. Re-work math problems.

Do not "second-guess" yourself and change your original answers.

- Research has indicated that your first hunch is more likely to be correct.
- You should only change answers to questions if you originally misread them or if you have encountered information elsewhere in the test that indicates with certainty that your first choice is incorrect.

Analyze your test results. Use the "Exam Error Monitoring" handout.

- Examine each question you answered correctly. Remember how you knew that the information was important when you studied. How did you study?
- Examine each question you did not get correct in order to understand the distinction between the correct alternative and the incorrect alternatives. Ask yourself why the correct answer is correct and why the alternatives are not.
- Determine the level of thought your professor expects of you by reading through all of the questions. Are you expected to recognize, analyze, synthesize and/or apply the material that has been presented to you? Study accordingly for the next test.

Adapted from: The Study Guides and Strategies website, created and maintained by Joe Landsberger, academic web site developer at the University of St. Thomas (UST), St. Paul, Minnesota. <http://www.studygs.net/lrnstudy.htm>.