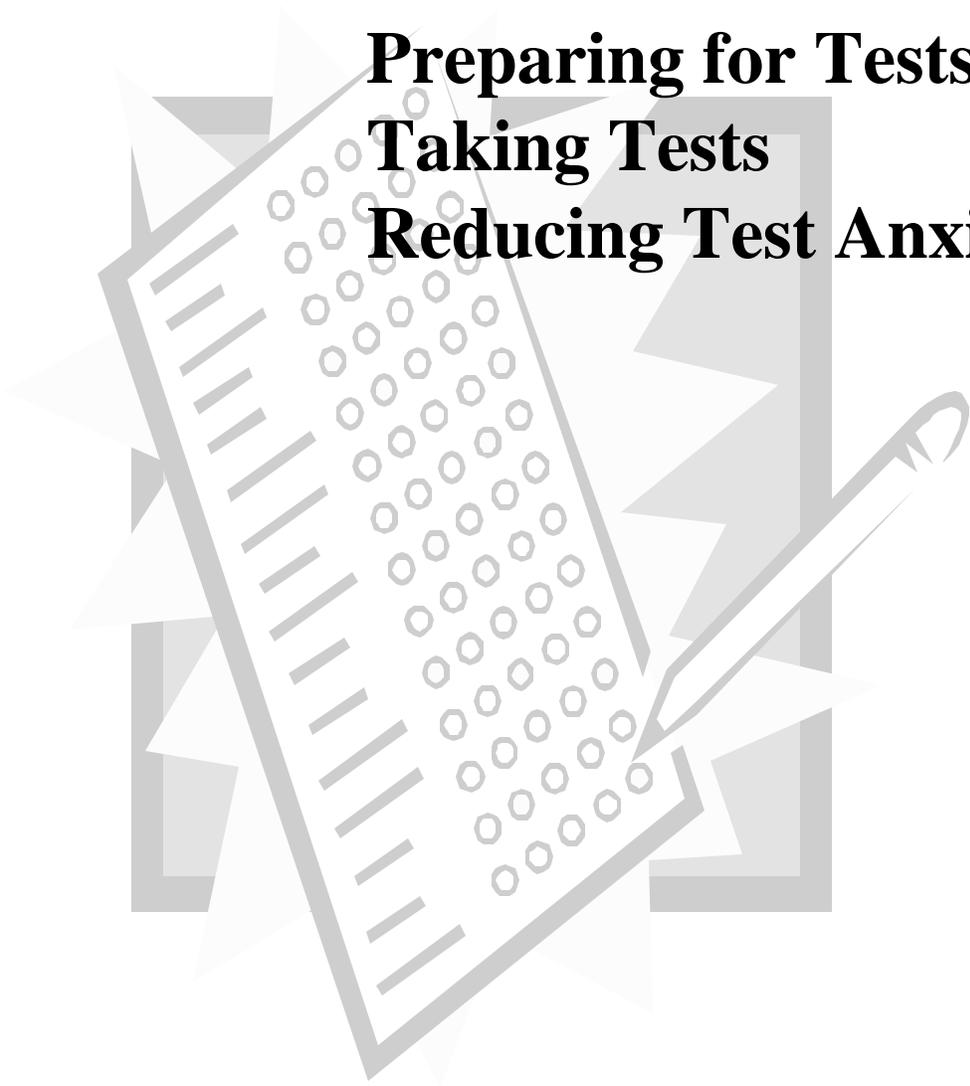


Test-Taking Strategies

**Preparing for Tests
Taking Tests
Reducing Test Anxiety**



This is a packet of test-taking strategies designed to be used with Test-Taking Workshops or with your instructor. The topics covered are: preparing for tests, taking tests, and reducing test anxiety. The types of tests covered are essay and objective. Objective examinations include multiple choice, matching, short answer, sentence completion, and true or false questions. Learning testing strategies will help to raise your test scores and your course grades.

This information has been adapted from a variety of study-skills textbooks. The last page is a bibliography of these textbooks which are recommended by the Student Support Center.

PREPARING FOR TESTS

| | |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Attend all classes. |
| 2. | Read all assigned material and take notes or write SQ3R questions. |
| 3. | Take organized and clear lecture notes. |
| 4. | Know your professors. |
| 5. | Make your presence known in class by your courtesy, cooperation and willingness to learn. |
| 6. | Ask questions to increase your understanding of course material. |
| 7. | Meet with your professors out of class. |
| 8. | Make use of tutoring services and Student Support Centers of the College. |
| 9. | Plan your study time. |
| 10. | Set study goals. |
| 11. | Learn the technical vocabulary of the course using index cards--use memory tricks such as associating difficult material with something you already know. |
| 12. | Organize the information you must remember |
| 13. | Separate review time from daily assignments. |
| 14. | Start reviewing systematically and early, not just the night before the test. |
| 15. | Divide the review material into logical sections and concentrate on one at a time. |
| 16. | Practice predicting and answering test questions. |
| 17. | Learn test-taking terms and strategies. |
| 18. | Examine previous tests to ascertain what you did well and what you did not do so well. |
| 19. | Find out what kind of a test it will be: objective, essay, or a combination of both. |
| 20. | Find out when and where the test will be given; what you are expected to bring with you (pens); and what you are allowed to bring with you (dictionary). Get to the test site early with appropriate materials and do deep breathing exercises to relax. Do not, at this time, continue to try to study. |
| 21. | Get plenty of sleep the night before the exam. |
| 22. | Get up early enough to avoid rushing and to eat a healthy breakfast. |
| 23. | Tell yourself you will do well - and you will! |

GENERAL TEST-TAKING TECHNIQUES

1. Before you start writing:

GLANCE OVER THE WHOLE EXAM. This does two things for you:

It gives you a “set” on the exam: what it covers, where the emphasis lies, what the main ideas seem to be. Many exams are composed of a series of short questions all related to one particular aspect of the subject, and then a longer question developing some ideas from another area.

It may relax you because if you read carefully all the way through it, you are bound to find something you feel competent to answer.



OBSERVE THE POINT VALUE OF THE QUESTIONS and then figure out a rough time allowance. If the total point value for the test is 100, then a 50-point question is worth about half of your time regardless of how many questions there are. (Hint: A quick rule of thumb for a one-hour test is to divide the point values in half.)

UNDERLINE ALL SIGNIFICANT WORDS IN THE DIRECTIONS.

Many students have penalized themselves because they did not see the word “or” (example: “Answer 1, 2, OR 3”). You do not get extra credit for answering three questions if the directions said to answer ONE. In fact, you will probably lose points for not fully developing your answer.

ASK the instructor if you do not clearly understand the directions.

2. When you begin to work:



THERE IS NOTHING SACRED ABOUT THE ORDER IN WHICH THE QUESTIONS ARE ASKED. Tackle the questions in the order that appeal to you most. Doing well on a question that you feel relatively sure of will be reassuring and will free your mind of tension. The act of writing often unlocks the temporarily blocked mental processes; when you finish that question, you will probably find the others less formidable. On the other hand, you may be the type of person who wants to get the hard one off his mind first and save the easy ones “for dessert”.

BE SURE TO IDENTIFY THE QUESTIONS CLEARLY so that the instructor knows which one you are answering.

KEEP THE POINT VALUE AND TIME ALLOWANCE IN MIND.

This may save you from a very common and panic-producing mistake such as taking twenty minutes of an hour test to answer a five-point question, and then finding you have five minutes left in which to answer a twenty-point question! Remember, it IS POSSIBLE to score more than five points on a five-point question! Work systematically, forcing yourself if necessary to do it. If you tend to rush at things, slow down. If you tend to dawdle, pace yourself.

Write as neatly as possible while keeping to your time allotment. You are graded on accuracy, not neatness, but a neat paper may convince the instructor that the answer is organized and accurate. A messy paper has the opposite effect!



3. When you are finished:

CHECK OVER YOUR ENTIRE PAPER. There are six reasons for this:

- 1) To see if you have left out any questions you meant to tackle later.
- 2) To see if you have followed directions.
- 3) To catch careless errors. Note: Don't take time to recopy answers unless you're sure they are really illegible. It's easier to be reasonably neat the first time.
- 4) Make sure you have numbered your answers correctly.
- 5) Make sure your name is on every page.
- 6) Make sure your answers are complete and that you have not left too much to the imagination of the professor.

TEST TAKING HINTS

HINTS FOR TAKING OBJECTIVE TESTS

1. Use time wisely.
2. Read all directions and questions carefully.
3. Attempt every question, but do the easy ones first.
4. Actively reason through the questions.
5. Choose the answer which the test maker intended.
6. Anticipate the answer, then look for it.

TRUE AND FALSE QUESTIONS

1. Look for absolute qualifiers such as: always, all, nearly.
If one is present, the question will probably be false.
2. Look for relative qualifiers such as: often, frequently, or seldom. These will probably be true.
3. If any part of the question is false, the whole question is false.
4. If you don't know the answer, guess; you have a 50-50 chance of being correct.

MATCHING QUESTIONS

1. Make sure you understand the directions for matching the items on the lists. For instance, can you use an item more than once?
2. Answer long matching lists in a systematic way, such as checking off those items already used.
3. Do the matches you know first.
4. Eliminate items on the answer list that are out of place or incongruous.
5. If you don't know the correct matches, guess.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Write no more than necessary.
2. With sentence completion or fill-in questions, make sure your answers are grammatically correct.
3. Make sure your response makes sense.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Anticipate the answer, then look for it.
2. Consider all the alternatives.
3. Relate options against each other.
4. Balance options against each other.
5. Use logical reasoning.
6. Use information obtained from other questions and options.
7. If the correct answer is not immediately obvious, eliminate alternatives that are obviously absurd, silly or incorrect.
8. Compare each alternative with the item of the question and with other alternatives.
9. Whenever two options are identical, then both must be incorrect.
10. If any two options are opposites, then at least one may be eliminated.
11. Look for options that do not match the item grammatically. These will be incorrect.

TIPS FOR TAKING OPEN-BOOK TESTS

1. Find out why you are being given an open-book test.
2. Prepare for an open-book test as carefully as other tests.
3. Prepare organizational summaries of the course using textbooks and lecture notes.
4. Use quotations from the book only when they relate to the question and supply supporting evidence.
5. Do not use extensive quotations--the professor knows the book. He/she wants to know what you know.

HINTS FOR TAKING ESSAY TESTS

1. Find out what the professor wants to see as evidence.
2. Learn the professor's point of view.
3. Determine the criteria that will be used to judge your answers.
4. Read the entire test through before starting.
5. Budget your time according to the point value of each question.
6. Use work sheets to jot down ideas, organize your answers, and remember details (dates, formulas).
7. Use the question, turned around, as your introductory statement.
8. Note whether you are to define, list, or compare in order to give the professor what he/she is looking for.
9. Organize your answer as in any well-developed paragraph by expressing your main idea and then using supporting facts and details to prove your statement.
10. Use facts to support your arguments.
11. Use the technical language of the subject.
12. Use examples, charts, and other illustrations to make your answers more exact.
13. Unless there is a penalty for guessing, answer all questions even if you are not sure.
14. Use partial answers and outlines if you are not sure or are running out of time.
15. Proofread your answers for clarity, grammar, spelling, punctuation and legibility.

IMPORTANT WORDS IN ESSAY QUESTIONS

ANALYZE: Present a complete statement of the elements of the idea. Adapt and stick to a single plan of analysis. Give any conclusions which result.

COMPARE: Look for qualities or characteristics that resemble each other. Emphasize similarities among them, but in some cases, also mention differences.

CONTRAST: Stress the differences between things, qualities, events, or problems.

CRITICIZE: Express your judgment about the merit or truth of the factors or views mentioned. Give the results of your analysis of these factors, discussing their limitations and good points.

DEFINE: Give concise, clear, and authoritative meanings. Don't give details, but make sure to give the limits of the definition. Show how the things you are defining differ from things that are similar.

DESCRIBE: Recount, characterize, sketch, or relate in sequence or narrative form.

DIAGRAM: Give a drawing, chart, or graphic answer. Usually you should label a diagram. In some cases, add a brief explanation or description.

DISCUSS: Examine, analyze carefully, and give reasons pro and con. Be complete: give details in an organized manner.

ENUMERATE: Write in list or outline form, giving points concisely one by one. (In some cases, write in paragraph form.)

EVALUATE: Carefully appraise the problem, citing both advantages and limitations. Emphasize judgment based on the appraisal of authorities and/or your own personal evaluation (depending on the demands of the questions).

EXPLAIN: Clarify, interpret, and spell out the material you present. Give reasons for differences of opinion or of results and try to analyze causes.

IDENTIFY: Write a brief note on who or what is to be identified. State distinguishing actions or qualities. Include enough information to separate individuals from others of its group.

ILLUSTRATE: Use a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example to explain or clarify a principle or problem.

INTERPRET: Translate, give examples of, solve, or comment on a subject, usually giving your judgment of it.

JUSTIFY: Prove or give reasons for decisions or conclusions, taking pains to be convincing.

LIST: As in "enumerate", write an itemized series of concise statements.

OUTLINE: Organize a description under main points and subordinate points, omitting minor details and stressing the arrangement or classification of things.

PROVE: Establish that something is true by citing factual evidence or giving clear, logical reasons.

RELATE: Show how things are related to, or connected with, each other; or how one causes another, correlates with another, or is like another.

REVIEW: Examine a subject critically, analyzing and commenting on the important statements to be made about it.

STATE: Present in brief, clear sequence, usually omitting details or examples.

SUMMARIZE: Give the main points or facts in condensed form like the summary of a chapter, omitting details and illustrations.

TRACE: In narrative form, describe progress, development, or historical events from some points of origin.

EXAMINATION TERMS

1. **IDENTIFICATION TERMS**

| | | | |
|-----------|----------|--------|------|
| cite | indicate | define | list |
| enumerate | mention | give | name |
| identify | state | | |

2. **DESCRIPTION TERMS**

| | | | |
|----------|------------|-----------|---------|
| describe | illustrate | discuss | sketch |
| review | develop | summarize | outline |
| diagram | trace | | |

3. **RELATION TERMS**

| | | | |
|----------|---------------|---------|-------------|
| analyze | differentiate | compare | distinguish |
| contrast | relate | | |

4. **DEMONSTRATION TERMS**

| | | | |
|-------------|---------|-------------|------|
| demonstrate | prove | explain why | show |
| justify | support | | |

5. **EVALUATION TERMS**

| | | | |
|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|
| assess | evaluate | comment | interpret |
| criticize | propose | | |

6. **EXACT TERMS**

| | | | |
|------|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| all | necessarily | always | never |
| must | no, non, without exception | | |

7. **INDEFINITE TERMS**

| | | | |
|------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------|
| hardly ever | rarely | seldom/infrequently | some/sometimes |
| often/frequently | usually | almost/always | |

THESE ARE WORDS TO HELP YOU EXPRESS YOURSELF BETTER WHEN ANSWERING ESSAY QUESTIONS.

COMPARE: used when two ideas that are being compared are alike: similarly, similar, to, both, like, as, likewise, as well, compared to in the same way, also either..., or, neither..., nor.

CONTRAST: used to express opposite ideas: but, yet, or, in spite of, still, however, although, regardless, even though, nevertheless, conversely, on the other hand, even so, on the contrary, in contrast, notwithstanding, despite, in spite of, though, instead of, rather than, opposed to.

CAUSE: used to state that the action or event occurred because of the reason that follows the signal word: because, for, since, whereas, as.

EFFECT: used to show the action caused the event after the work: so, so that, as a result of, in order to, therefore, consequently, thus, hence.

CONDITION: used to show the specific condition under which the idea is true: If, when, providing, unless, whenever, only if, after, assuming that.

SEQUENCE OR TRACE: used to organize ideas in a particular order: first, second, next, last, in the first place, finally, then, later, before, subsequently, presently, once...then, eventually, following this.

EXAMPLE OR EMPHASIS: used to identify an idea that is being illustrated or emphasized:

for example, for instance, specifically, to illustrate, to demonstrate, such as, as in the case of, like, as, in particular, in other words, that is, to repeat, primarily, especially, again.



DEFINITION: used to note a specific meaning given for a term: meaning is, is defined as.

CONTINUATION OF IDEA: used to add another idea or more information about the same thought: and, nor, also, besides, further, furthermore, in addition, too, moreover, again, and then, eventually, another.

SUMMARY OR CONCLUSION: used to restate main idea: to sum-up, in brief, in short, on the whole, as I have said, in conclusion, thus, therefore, for these reasons, consequently, hence, finally, to repeat, to reiterate, in summary.

CHOOSE THE BETTER ESSAY

ORGANIZE YOUR ANSWER: As mentioned before, a well written, organized essay often gets a higher grade than its opposite. Read each of these examples and notice how they differ. Each essay was written in response to this question on a psychology final exam: Describe the stages involved in the memory process

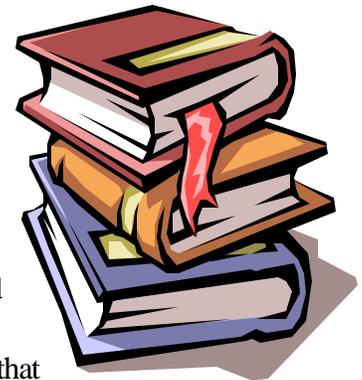
EXAMPLE 1: Memory is important to everybody's life. Memory has special ways to help you get a better collection of things and ideas. Psychologists believe that memory has three stages: encoding, storage, and retrieval.

In the encoding state, you are putting facts and ideas into a code, usually words, and filing them away in your memory. Encoding involves preparing information for storage in memory.

The second stage of memory is storage. It is the stage that most people call memory. It involves keeping information so that it is accessible for use later in time. How well information is stored can be affected by old information already stored and newer information that is added later.

The third step in memory is retrieval, which means the ability to get back information that is in storage. There are two types of retrieval--recognition and recall. In recognition, you have to be able to identify the correct information from several choices. In recall, you have to pull information directly from your memory without any help or clues. When you write an essay test, you are using the recall type of retrieval.

EXAMPLE 2: Memory is very complicated in how it works. It involves remembering things that are stored in your mind and being able to pull them out when you want to remember them. When you pull information out of your memory it is called retrieval. How well you can remember something is affected by how you keep the information in your mind and how you put it in. When keeping or storing information, you have to realize that this information will be affected by old information already in your memory. Putting information in your memory is called encoding, and it means that you store facts and ideas in word form in your memory. Information stored in your memory can also be influenced by information that you added to your memory later.



There are two ways you can retrieve information. You can either recognize it or recall it. When you recognize information, you are able to spot the correct information among other information. When you recall information, you have to pull information out of your head. Recall is what you have to do when you write an essay exam.

Example 1 is the better essay. Can you see why this is true?

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES FOR PRACTICE AT HOME

THINKING ABOUT BODY PARTS:

1. Select a comfortable place to lie down. Remove shoes, loosen belt or tight clothing. Stretch out on your back, arms resting by your sides, feet slightly apart, eyes gently closed.
2. Think to yourself, "I am now going to relax completely. When I wake up, I will feel fully refreshed."
3. Think about your feet, wiggle your toes, flex your ankles. Then "let go". Let go of all tension and let your feet rest limp and heavy.
4. Think of the lower part of your legs, your knees and thighs, up to your hips. Imagine them just sinking into the floor, heavy and relaxed.
5. Now think of your hands. Wiggle your fingers and flex your wrists, then let go, relax.
6. Think of your lower arm, elbow and upper arm, all the way to your shoulder. Picture all the tension just melting away.
7. Think about your abdomen. Let the tension go and allow your breathing to flow more smoothly and deeply.
8. Think about your stomach and chest, up to your throat and neck. Continue breathing more deeply. Just imagine all the tension flowing out, and you are relaxing more and more.
9. Now think about your throat, neck, and head feeling limp and relaxed. Relax your facial muscles. Drop your jaw, parting your lips and teeth slightly. Picture yourself completely relaxed.
10. If you are aware of any remaining tension anywhere in your body, go to that area mentally and relax the tension by "letting go".
11. Continue to remain in this completely relaxed state for 5-10 minutes. You may think pleasant thoughts or simply blank your mind and enter a stage of light sleep.
12. When you are ready to awaken, say to yourself, "I have been deeply relaxed. I am now ready to wake up, feeling completely relaxed and refreshed."
13. Begin to wake up by flexing the ankles and wiggling the toes. Then wiggle the fingers, and gently shake your wrists.
14. Bend the right knee, then the left. Bend right and left arms.
15. Open your eyes. Stretch your arms. Then slowly sit up, stand up and stretch. You are now ready to continue with your activities.

DEEP BREATHING EXERCISE

1. Come into the classroom a few minutes early.
2. Take all books and papers off desktop.
3. Take out pens, pencils, eraser, other allowable items-- (dictionary, calculator, etc.) and put on desktop. Check with the instructor of the class before the test is given about such items.
4. Sit comfortably. Then close your eyes. Notice your breathing.
5. Breathe deeply and slowly. Sit straight. Let your breathing be deep and natural. Breathe deeply and smoothly.
6. Become aware of your body and let it relax. Let your whole body become easy.
7. Continue until you are breathing easily and relaxed, then when you are ready, open your eyes. You will be alert and ready to work. Imagine yourself confident, strong, and able to do well on the test.

To reduce test-anxiety during a test, talk to yourself. The brain is very susceptible to positive suggestions.

FOR EXAMPLE:

“Now let’s see--just exactly what does this say?”

“What’s the main point?”

“Let’s see--I made some notes on that--toward the end of the yellow study sheets I used.”

“Don’t get anxious...stop a minute and take a couple of deep breaths - relax my muscles - good.”

“Oh, oh, I don’t remember that...well, I’ll come back to it later.

“Slow down...don’t rush. There’s plenty of time.”

“I’m not sure of this, but I’ll start writing and maybe that will get me into it.”

“They finished early...well, I’ll just pay attention here and finish up. Forget them.”

“I’m doing O.K. I’ll pass this.”

If you think you’re smart and act smart... you will BE smart!

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