

Top tips for taking tests and exams



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1. Fine tune your study skills.

Having a solid, consistent study routine is key to being prepared for tests and exams. Pick up an effective studying tip sheet for more helpful information about studying and find strategies that work for you.

2. Arrive on time for the test.

Coming late to a test or exam is one thing to avoid; coming early is another. When students show up ahead of time, it is almost certain that discussion about the test will arise and this could cause test anxiety. Remember that anxiety is contagious and can hinder test performance. Avoid added stress by arriving on time for the test or exam with a clear mind and choosing not to participate in pre-test chatter.

3. Do a memory dump.

Before you even begin reading the test or exam instructions, brainstorm everything you have memorized (especially if it was only memorized recently) on the front cover of your test. This technique helps prevent anxiety and clears your mind as you enter into test writing mode.

4. Budget your time wisely.

Time constraints can cause anxiety and hinder performance. Take control by factoring in how much time you have to complete the test, how many questions you have and what types of questions are on the test. Remember that some types of questions take more time than others and should be accounted for in your planning.

5. Complete the easy questions first.

Bank time and marks by going through the entire test and completing the questions that come to you quickly and easily.

6. Read the questions carefully.

Though you may be constrained by time, it is crucial not to rush through questions. Make sure you fully understand what you are being asked to do.

7. Practice relaxation.

Relaxation techniques can be useful during a test if you find that anxiety is interfering with your performance. Closing your eyes, taking deep breaths and tensing and relaxing your muscles are a few ways to manage anxiety. Avoiding caffeine and other simulants may also help.

8. Learn the tricks of the trade.

Different types of tests require the use of different strategies. Test formats range from multiple choice (very common in college); true or false; short answer; essay style; and even open book. You may encounter tests with a variety of question types. Knowing how to best approach each type will make your test and exam experiences less stressful. Student Academic Learning Services staff can provide you with different test taking strategies, so make an appointment today to learn more.

9. Do not be afraid to change answers.

If you can justify changing your original answer, you should change it. However, don't change an answer based on a hunch.

10. Learn from your mistakes.

After you write a test, learn from it. It is very important that you know where you went wrong so that you can improve for next time, especially if you are going to be tested on the same material at some point. If the course policy is to not return your test, schedule an appointment with your professor to review it.