

A GUIDE TO TAKING TESTS

Taking tests is an art form and somewhat procedural. First, you want to learn the art of taking tests and develop your techniques. Second, as you take more and more tests, you want to start to cultivate testing good (and positive) habits which can help you to succeed. Developing good testing habits will do you a service in the case that you might have a particular challenging test, you are not feeling well, or you have “test anxiety.”

Testing Tips

Before the Test:

1. STUDY.
2. REVIEW by Preparing Yourself a Study Sheet with all the testing concepts on the sheet.
3. MEMORIZE any material like dates, names, formulas, etc.
4. CONSTRUCT practice tests. Ask an AI for help. Many AIs will construct practice tests/quizzes on just about any concepts. Or, tell the AI your topic and just ask the AI for some practice questions. Hint: Many instructors are using AIs to write their tests.
5. EAT a healthy meal, and sleep well the night before.
6. EAT a healthy breakfast.
7. ARRIVE early and your review notes.

During the Test:

1. RELAX. Take a few deep breaths before beginning. Find a comfortable sitting position. Keep in mind that Cortisol, a hormone produced by stress, affects memory recall. Furthermore, be positive. Tell yourself: All tests are “practice” for future tests.
2. SKIM through the test before you begin.
3. READ all the instructions first. Tests are instruction-based tasks.
4. SKIP difficult questions. If permitted, answer all the questions you know first, allowing more time to answer more difficult questions later.
5. ANSWER every question (even if you must guess).
6. READ every question and every answer carefully.
7. MANAGE your time, if the test is timed. Otherwise, take your time (so long as the test is not timed).
8. CLUES may be present. Some questions and answers offer essential clues. Other times, our mind may recognize the answer after a second or two after reading it.
9. USE the process of elimination for multiple choice questions.
10. GUESS, if you are not sure on the answer. Trust your instincts (go with your gut). Your mind works consciously but unconsciously too.
11. DROP everything in your memory on the page for essay questions.
12. REVIEW all your answers before you submit the test.

Open Note and Open Book Tests:

1. ORGANIZE your notes carefully for easy accessibility.
2. FORMAT your notes for easy accessibility. For example, if the notes are on a Content-Management System or Learning Management System, print them out, if needed. Or, if you

are able to use a computer, convert the CMS/LMS pages into PDFs and place them into a single folder on your desktop.

2. PRIORITIZE understanding over memorization.
3. BOOKMARK and highlight the most important concepts, items, dates, names, facts, etc. in the book or in the notes.
4. PREWRITE for any potential essay questions (or create an outline with full sentences).
5. USE your computer or cellular phone, if you are allowed. Sometimes, “open note” means open resource too. Use the web. Use AI. Use whatever resource is available, and predetermine and set bookmarks in your browser to help you.

Unconventional Test Strategies (During the Test):

1. COVER the answers, which can help to force the mind to formulate the answer.
2. WRITE on the test unless you are not allowed too. Ask. Make notes in the margins, cross out wrong answers, underline any clues, underline key words in the question, etc. In some cases, even doodling can help the brain to make connections by lowering your mental guard to remember something. Our brains are funny that way. Sometimes, even writing on the back of the page can help too. Use those spaces to aid yourself in doing well on the test.
3. RESTATE the question in your own words.

Unconventional Test Strategies (Before the Test):

1. ENERGIZE by bringing snacks and drinks, if they are allowed, bring them. Mental stress eats up our energy.
2. EXPOSE yourself to the material in a variety of ways (before the test).
 - +Read your notes
 - +Record yourself reading the notes, then listen to the playback (as many times as needed).
 - +Write and rewrite the notes.
 - +Make index cards and memorize the contents.
3. SOCIALIZE and join a study group. Peer/social and even positive emotional interactions can help to encode concepts in the mind. Also, have group members quiz your knowledge. Note: Peer interactions can foster competition which can stimulate the initiative to study better.
4. USE the modes. Sometimes, conventional studying does not work for everyone. Consider an alternative memorization or learning strategy. Some people create songs about the material. Some people draw extensive “mind maps” or visual representations of the material. Some people must paint items to be remembered. Some people must write answers on tennis balls and play catch with them. Some people must post sheets of paper with the test answers all over their homes. Sound strange? Well, if you really must pass an exam, consider it. Use the visual, the aural, and the tactile.
5. REWARD yourself. No matter how you do on the exam. Reward yourself for your bravery, courage, and for working hard to study the material. Believe it or not, positive habits reward us in the future. If you pass your exam, increase the size of the reward.

