Test Taking Strategies

Tests are one of the stressful moments during college and final exams are even more so. But, there are things you can do to give yourself more power and control in those important moments.

Before the Test

- Find out what type of exams the course has and the dates of those exams, put them on your calendar now.
- Talk to other people who took this course from this professor and find out information like how much of the exam was from the book? from the lecture? what type of questions?
- Keep up with the homework
- Find old tests
- Study in groups with other good students, anticipate and ask each other questions

The Day of the Test

- Psych yourself up - be confident
- In the morning get up early enough not to rush, make sure all your tools are ready
- Eat a healthy meal
- Glance over your notes just as a refresher
- Stop studying at least 1 hour before, relax and get yourself in a good frame of mind
- Avoid those crazy people who are over stressed out, don't catch their nervousness
- Get a good seat. Can you see the board? Is it comfortable? Do you have good light?
- Take deep slow breaths as the test is being passed out.
- Know that a little anxiety is good - it keeps you on your toes
- Visualize your notes, how hard you studied, how great you are going to feel in about an hour.

At the Test

- First thing - put your name on it.
- Glance over the entire test. How long is it? What types of questions are there?
- Write out any memorized lists on the exam paper.
- Read all the directions carefully. Ask if you don’t understand.
- Answer the easy questions first so you don’t miss any easy points. It also builds confidence. Put the test in your order. Be in control. Don’t get stuck.
- Keep track of the time. Don’t get caught unaware. When half the time is up, you should be half finished with the test. Use all the time allotted.
- Start preparing for the next test.

Myth: Your first guess is your best guess.
Fact: Changing a wrong answer to a right one outnumbers right to wrong by 3 to 1.

Multiple Choice Tests
Remember, the correct answer is there, you just have to find it. These questions are usually structured with a partial statement (or stem) which leads into several sentence endings (or options). One is correct. The rest are incorrect. Generally all options are grammatically consistent. The stem is long and the options are short OR the stem is short and the options are long. All the options seem plausible.

1. Read the stem. Come up with your own answer BEFORE you read the choices. Read the choices and cross out the ones you know are wrong. If you’re left with one answer, pick it and move on.
2. If you have more than one choice left, don’t spend a lot of time on it, pick one, mark it to come back to later and move on.
3. Examine each full sentence as a True or False statement.
4. Remember scope. Correct answers are within the scope of the material covered. Wrong answers tend to bring in information outside the scope of the material.
5. Watch out for negatives, double negatives and extreme words.
6. All of the above is usually correct. If two of the answers are correct, even if you are not sure about the third, all of the above is correct.
7. Be aware of look-alike answers: if 2 choices differ by only one word, one of them may be correct.
8. Check longer answers carefully.

Essay Questions
1. Read the directions carefully. How many questions are there? Are they all the same point value?
2. Plan before you answer. Make notes on the the paper, jot down good phrases, facts, quick outline.
3. Start with the easiest question and that’s the one you know the most about.
4. Answer the question given and answer it completely. Respond correctly to the words such as compare, contrast, criticize, define, discuss, enumerate, explain, give an example, identify, justify.
5. Use facts and logic, not emotion and feeling.
6. Write carefully to avoid spelling and grammatical errors. Not only do they usually count off but they detract from your answer as well.
7. Be natural. Don’t try to write in a style that is not yours.
8. Organize. KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid).
9. Use transitions to help the reader: for example, such as, similarly, next, however, and, first.
10. Start with a bang. Don’t save your good stuff for the end. They might not read it. End with a short summary so the grader knows you ended and just didn’t run out of time.

Pick 3 of the above Test Taking tips that sound like something that would help you. Write them down below along with how and when you will incorporate them into your Becoming a More Successful Student Plan.

1. 
2. 
3. 

Power of Positive Thinking: I look forward to taking tests and enjoy the opportunity to show what I know. I prepare myself thoroughly for each test. I review all class lecture notes, textbook notes and related data. I easily memorize all pertinent information.
confident and relaxed at exam time. I first preview the test then plan my strategy. I move quickly and effortlessly through the exam. Correct answers come to mind instantly. My answers are clear and true. I am a successful test-taker.