

Taking Problem-Solving Tests:

- Review your formulas just before the test. Once you have the exam in your hands, on the actual test write down any formulas, equations, and rules that are difficult to remember. Do it before working on a problem to avoid confusion.
- Analyze before you compute. Set up the problem before you begin to solve it. When you take the time to study a problem you can frequently find shortcuts.
- Draw a picture or diagram if you are stuck.
- If you are unable to work a problem, go on to the next one and come back to work on it if time allows.
- Check your work systematically. Ask yourself: Did I read this correctly?; Did I use the correct formula or equation?; Is my arithmetic correct?
- Avoid the temptation to change your answer at the last minute, unless you are sure it is correct.
- Even if you know that your answer is incorrect, turn your work in because you might be given partial credit.
- Show all the steps in answering the problem and clearly identify the final result, making it easy to identify.

Taking Objective Tests:

- Answer all questions without skipping or jumping around.
- Guess if you have to. Don't leave blanks, unless your instructor has indicated that you will lose points by answering incorrectly.
- If you have to guess, choose the longest answer.
- In multiple-choice anticipate the answer and then look for it.
- Look for answers to questions in other questions.
- If among several answers two are similar, except for one or two words, choose one of those two answers.
- Do not waste too much time on any particular question. Mark it and return later as time permits. Be very aware of questions that have negatives such as "NOT" or "NEVER", as they might be tricky. Those sentences with double or triple negatives must be read very carefully to assure complete understanding.
- Questions with absolute qualifiers, such as "always" or "never" usually indicate a false statement.
- Check for qualifying words such as "ALMOST-SOME-NONE", "ALWAYS-USUALLY-SELDOM-NEVER", "BEST-WORST", "HIGHEST-LOWEST", OR

"SMALLEST-LARGEST". When you see one of these qualifiers test to see if it is true by substituting another qualifier. If your substitution makes a better statement the question is false, if the substitution does not make a better statement, the question is true. For example: *Birds always fly (false); Birds usually fly (true) Birds seldom fly (false); Birds never fly (false)*. Obviously there are some birds that do not fly, so the answer is usually.

- Watch for modifying or limiting phrases inserted into true-false questions. If one part of the T/F question is wrong, then the whole question is FALSE. (*i.e., the statement "John F. Kennedy, killed in 1965, was the 35th President of the USA" is false. Although he was indeed the 35th president, he was actually killed in 1963*).
- Be alert for multiple ideas or concepts within the same true-false statement. All parts of the statement must be true or the entire statement is false.
- If the question states "All the above" or "None of the above" then the answer is rarely correct.
- If the answer calls for a sentence completion (fill in the blank or multiple-choice) eliminate the options that would not form grammatically correct answers.



Test Taking Strategies



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When an exam is announced, make sure you:

- Know what materials (chapters, class notes, handouts, etc.) will be covered, and organize them by topic.
- Know what kind of test it will be: Essay, Objective (true/false, multiple choice, fill in the blank, matching type), or Problem-Solving.
- Find out as much as possible about scoring, nature and format of the questions.
- Prepare study questions based on sample tests, previous quizzes, lecture notes, handouts, etc.
- Find out if there are sample tests or previous quizzes.
- Be sure to attend class, especially the class before the test.
- Ask questions as they come up. Get help from the teacher, classmates, and tutors.
- Try your hardest to form a study group.

Design your study approach according to the type of test:

- For an **objective test**, concentrate on memorizing factual details such as names, dates, formulas, facts and definitions.

- For an **essay exam**, concentrate on understanding general concepts, principles and theories.
- For a **problem solving test**, work examples of each type of problem that may appear on the test. You should also:
 1. Translate your problems into English by putting problems, equations, and formulas into words. *For example:* $E=mc^2$ or Energy equals mass times the square of speed of light.
 2. **Use time drills** - Practice working fast, work with others and time each other.
 3. **Review formulas** - Right before the test, review any formulas you will need. Then quickly write them down on the exam just before you start working on the problems.

Plan for study time:

- Schedule regular, short, focused reviews with short breaks in between. This method works much better than late night cram sessions!
- Make a final comprehensive review on the night before the test.
- But...go to bed early, so you are mentally and physically alert. Force worry out, be positive!

What to do during the test:

- Arrive early.
- Give yourself time to relax and be prepared.

- If taking a Scantron test: always use a #2 pencil; purchase your answer sheets well ahead of time; try to answer each question; double check answer lines with your straight edge; and erase completely and thoroughly when changing answers.
- Make certain you **fully understand** the test directions before answering any part of the test.
- If you reach a question and forget something, don't panic, go on and return to it later.
- Do not feel uncomfortable if other students finish before you.
- Don't try to be the first one to leave, if you have any time left check over your answers.

Taking Essay Tests:

- Read all the questions rapidly. Write down any important facts or ideas. This can prevent answers from overlapping. Make sure you answer all parts of the question.
- Estimate how much time you will have for each question. Do this by determining the level of difficulty and importance.
- Keep track of your time so you don't spend too much time on one question. You can jot the time done on the test.
- Answer the easiest questions first.
- Concentrate on one question at a time.

- Before you start writing, make a brief outline on the paper.
- Make sure you know what the question is asking. Verbs like "illustrate", "list", "define", "compare", "trace", "explain", and "identify" require different types of answers.
- Get to the main points immediately. The essay is graded on what you need to say and not on how much you say.
- Include factual details to support your answer when appropriate.
- Write legibly and make corrections neatly.
- Leave plenty of space between your answers to add information. You can raise your grade by adding last minute information and by correcting careless errors.
- If you run into a question that you can't answer right away, leave it to be answered last.
- Don't leave any question blank, do your best even if it is a partial answer.
- Take time to go over your answers for accuracy.
- Check spelling, grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation.