

# Test Taking Tips

## Before the Test Tips

1. Get a good night's sleep and eat a high protein breakfast. Drink plenty of water.
2. Practice guided imagery, visualizations of succeeding on the test, mentally "going where the information is stored in your brain", or breathing techniques.
3. **Don't** study right before the test. Concentrate on being calm and mentally accessing the information you have already studied.
4. Get to the test a little early.
5. **Don't** engage in negative talk with other students before the test, such as "I'm so nervous – I don't know if I studied enough."
6. Eliminate negative thoughts or self-talk by replacing them with a positive affirmation, like "I am prepared for the test and I will do well" or "I am smart – I can do this."
7. Ask your professor if you can use a blank piece of paper during the test (be sure to ask or it may look like you are cheating). Use the paper for "brain dumping" or "mind mapping" during the exam.
8. Make a decision to ignore students who finish the test before you. Research shows that students who leave early usually don't score as well as those who take more time.
9. Sit as close as possible to the area where you learned the information in class.

## Multiple Choice Test Tips

1. Read the directions carefully.
2. Read the sentence stem, think of the answer, **and then** find it in the choices.
3. Pay careful attention to negative words (underline them) in the stem and these are distracters.
4. Read all the options, before choosing.
5. Don't dwell on the ones you don't know. Close your eyes and tell yourself, "the answer will come," mark the question, and then move on to questions you know. Go back to the one(s) you marked and try again – the answer has probably come to you.
6. Go back to the questions you were unsure of. If the answer hasn't come to you, use one of the strategies below to help you answer the question.

## During the Test Strategies

1. Look for the one that is grammatically correct.
2. Look for similar words in the question and answer.
3. Look for the longest and most specific answer.
4. Try the "True or False" technique.
5. Stick to the subject matter of the course.
6. Watch out for negatives and extreme wording.
7. Numbers in the middle range are usually correct.
8. If two options are opposite, the answer is probably one of them.
9. Research shows the most commonplace answer is "C" followed by "B".
10. "None of the above" is seldom correct.
11. "All of the above" is often correct if the answers are very specific.



*My favorite tip: Self-test before the exam and time yourself, just like a real test.*

## True/False Test Tips

1. 100% qualifiers are usually false statements.  
*no, never, none, every, always, all, only, entirely*
2. Qualifiers that fall between extremes are usually true.  
*seldom, sometimes, often, frequently, most, many, few, some, usually, generally, ordinarily*
3. Remember, if any part of the statement is false, then the entire statement is false.
4. Pay attention to conjunctions and phrases:  
*such as, therefore, thus, because, consequently, so, as a result*
5. Pay attention to negative words in the statement.  
*Not, cannot, can't, won't, don't, no*

## Essay Exam Tips

### Plan Before You Answer:

1. Read the exam carefully.
2. Read all the questions. Note how much time you should allot to each question.
3. Jot cues as you read. Use the “brain dump” technique.
4. Start with the easiest questions.
5. Number parts of a multi-part question (list these as part of your answer).

### Answering:

1. Understand the question completely (see #5 above).
2. Strive for a complete answer (see #5 above).
3. Briefly outline your answer in the margin of your paper.
4. Use facts and logic.
5. Avoid giving your opinion, unless specifically directed to give it.
6. Be concise.
7. Write legibly.
8. Reread your answer for clarity.

## Melting “Brain-freeze” Techniques

1. Recreate the testing scene. Get practice tests from your professor, or create your own, and take the test in the same time frame you are given in class with the same kind of distractions.
2. Focus your attention on breathing. Concentrate on the air going in and out of your lungs – long, deep breaths will calm you and send oxygen to your brain. Do this for two minutes.
3. Hear your negative thoughts and mentally yell: “Stop!” Then, mentally repeat an affirmation such as, “The answers will come” or “I am smart – I can do this”, several times.
4. Discover where the tension is in your body. Tense and release the muscles in this area and become aware when relaxation occurs during the release. Focus on the relaxation and recreate the sensation whenever you choose during the exam.
5. Use guided imagery. This works best if you practice before the test. Close your eyes and see yourself in your favorite, most relaxing place – a beach or forest are good examples. Feel everything about this place, including sights, sounds, and smells. Once you are proficient, you can take this quick fantasy trip right during the test. When you are there, mentally tell yourself “Go to the place where the answers are.” Take a deep breath, open your eyes and begin writing.

