

GENERAL TIPS FOR TEST-TAKING

A GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Purdue University Academic Success Center

PREPARING FOR TESTS

FAMILIARIZE

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE EXAM.

Ask your professor/instructor:

- How long it will be
- What kind of questions will be on it
- Which concepts are most important and which chapters to focus on
- For some sample test questions and whether there is a copy of a similar test on file in a library

Look over the tests you have already taken in the course and predict what you will need to prepare for – the content of the questions and what skills you will be asked to use.

OVERVIEW

REVIEW ALL THE WORK TO BE DONE AND SCHEDULE TIME TO DO IT.

- Make a list of all the tasks you must complete to prepare for the exam.
- Given what topics you expect to be most important on the test, set priorities among your study tasks, and plan to do the most important ones first.
- Keep as much as possible to your own routines.

If you do not know how to make a study schedule, refer to our guide on time management:

[10 Tips for Time Management](#)

MANAGE

DEAL WITH UNREAD MATERIALS.

Preview the material, dividing it up into parts, looking for the organizational scheme of the work. Decide:

- What parts you can omit
- What parts you can skim
- What parts you want to read

Set time limits for each part and keep to the limits. Use the following techniques to help you move through the reading:

- Skim all the reading material first (except the parts that you have decided to omit) so you will have at least looked at everything before the test. Take notes.
- Read, emphasizing key sentences and concentrating on understanding ideas expressed. Try editorializing as you read by asking yourself questions like **who**, **what**, **where**, **when**, and **how**.
- Recite the material to yourself immediately, self-testing at the end of each part to enhance recall even without later review.

REVIEW

REVIEW ACTIVELY.

Integrate notes, text, and supplementary information onto summary sheets by:

- Diagramming, charting, categorizing in tables
- Outlining or writing paragraph summaries of the information

Try to create a summary sheet for each main idea, concept, and study session.

Use as many of the suggested ways possible, bringing all your senses. The more of yourself you put into these sheets, the better you will remember the information.

PRACTICE

PRACTICE DOING WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING ON THE TEST.

- If you will be solving problems, then that is what you need to be doing while studying. If you will be conjugating Spanish verbs, write those out.
- Answer unassigned problems or questions within the text.
- Anticipate test questions by frequently thinking, “If I were making up this test, I would probably ask....” Then answer your question.

Remember, the single most important way to prepare for any test is to practice what you will be doing on the test.

PARTNER

IT IS OFTEN USEFUL TO STUDY WITH OTHER WELL-PREPARED STUDENTS.

Attend any review sessions, if available.

- Use these forums to clarify any questions you have about the materials and the test.
- Do not expect review sessions to repeat any lectures nor to present any additional information.

The purpose of these sessions is to give you the opportunity to ask questions about the information to further your understanding.

TAKING TESTS

BRACE

PREPARE YOURSELF EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY AS WELL AS INTELLECTUALLY

Get into a “fighting” attitude, emotionally ready to do your best.

- Stay away from others right before the test. Anxiety is contagious.
- Focus on what you know rather than on what you do not know: reinforce your strengths and forget about your weaknesses.

Prepare your brain for optimum functioning by keeping your physical resources well-maintained.

- Get your rest the night before a test.
- Eat well-balanced meals. Avoid fasts; do not ingest caffeine (coffee, soft drinks) abnormally. If you’re not used to it, don’t take it. If it’s normal for you, keep within moderate amounts.
- Keep up with your regular exercise.

WRITE DOWN PRECARIOUS INFORMATION.

When you first receive the exam, use the back to write down any information you are worried you might forget during the course of the test.

Remember to **first** ask whether you can write on the test form itself.

PREVIEW

PREVIEW THE WHOLE TEST BEFORE BEGINNING.

Before you start answering any questions, look over the whole exam.

- Make sure your copy has no missing or duplicate pages.
- Ask the instructor or proctor to clarify any ambiguities.
- Read all directions carefully.

PLAN

PLAN YOUR TIME.

Allow the most time for questions which offer the most points.

Allocate time at the end to review your answers.

BEGIN

START WITH THE EASY QUESTIONS TO BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE.

Start with questions you know. This builds your confidence and leaves time for harder questions.

Mark questions you are not immediately sure of and return to those later.

Finish the entire exam. Put down some answer for each questions, even if you must guess (unless there is a penalty for guessing).

RELAX

DO NOT PANIC IF YOU DON'T KNOW AN ANSWER.

Don't worry if you see a question you did not anticipate or prepare for.

- Use everything you know about the content of the course: the instructor's explanations and your own reasoning ability to analyze the question. Create a logical answer.
- Go for partial credit when you know you cannot get all the points. If you have studied, you're bound to know something.

READ

READ THE QUESTION AS IT IS.

Avoid overanalyzing or oversimplifying, or you will end up answering a question that exists only in your mind, not on the grading key.

Interpret the test within the scope of the course.

ANALYZING RETURNED TESTS

REWORK

RETRY ANY INCORRECT ANSWERS.

If you receive your test back to keep, rework your errors, trying to reason out why the correct answer was correct and why yours was not.

If you do not receive your test back, visit your instructor's office to take a look at your answer sheet and the questions you missed.

IDENTIFY

IDENTIFY THE REASON YOU MISSED A QUESTION.

- Did you fail to read it correctly?
- Did you neglect to prepare for it?
- Was the test at a more difficult level than you anticipated?
- Did you run out of time?

CHECK

CHECK THE LEVEL OF DETAIL AND SKILL OF THE TEST.

- Were most of the questions cover precise details and facts or were they over main ideas and principles?
- Did the questions come straight from the text?
- Did the test maker expect you to make more sophisticated transformations and analyses?

ANALYZE

ASK YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR PERFORMANCE.

Did you experience problems with anxiety or blocking during the test?

Seek out help and advice for test-taking problems.

Academic Success Center

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