

PREPARING FOR TEST

Tests are the primary measure of students' knowledge throughout their academic careers. Tests may be used to enhance student learning (e.g., challenge students to apply their skills) or to measure student knowledge (e.g., to determine course grades or make instructional decisions). Tests, however, do not always give a true picture of a student's knowledge or abilities. Some students who have a good grasp of material have great difficulties demonstrating their knowledge in a testing situation. Learning how to effectively prepare for tests and to develop good test-taking skills are crucial elements of becoming a successful student.

Knowing how to study for tests requires that students attend carefully and consistently to instruction, determining which information is important for an upcoming test. While studying, students must make their minds work efficiently, creating a study plan to guide them, and monitoring progress at each step. Students must also develop a practical system for remembering information, such as asking and answering questions as they study, or using memory strategies to enhance recall of important material. Finally, students must learn to "think like the teacher," anticipating questions the teacher is likely to ask, and matching their study techniques to the type of test and the material being studied.

The act of taking a test requires that students coordinate multiple skills, often under the pressure of time. Students must organize their time effectively and work at an appropriate pace. They may be required to recall information precisely and accurately, or to provide an elaborate response to a problem or question. Students must often make effective use of problem solving strategies, recognize patterns and rules, and exhibit flexibility to best demonstrate their knowledge in a testing situation.

Essential test preparation strategies and tips

- Organization of study materials and time.
- Create a study plan and a revision plan.
- Create summary notes for quick revision.
- Use effective memory strategies.

Kinds of test Questions

- Listing questions.

- Essay questions and formats
- Definition questions with key words.
- Multiple choice questions (MCQs)

Different strategies are needed to prepare for different kinds of test questions.

Master objective tests:

MULTIPLE CHOICE STRATEGIES

1. Answer the easy questions first, then the harder ones. Don't get nervous if some questions look unfamiliar. Skip them and return to them later.
2. Pay attention to qualifiers ("usually," "none," "always," "never") and key words ("except," "all but the following," "the best," "the least," etc.)
3. Try to anticipate the correct answer before looking at the options.
4. Read all of the options; eliminate the ones you know are incorrect.

TRUE - FALSE STRATEGIES

1. Watch for absolutes such as "always," "never," or "all" and "none." If they are present, chances are the statement is false.
2. If a statement is more detailed or specific than most, chances are it is true.
3. Never leave a blank – you have a 50% chance of getting it right!
4. Unusual sounding statements are likely to be false.

MATCHING COLUMNS STRATEGIES

1. Read all the items in both columns first before selecting answers.
2. Instead of looking at the one word column first and trying to select a match, read the column with the definitions or explanations and match those to the one-word column.
3. Mark easy choices first and eliminate them as you move to the more difficult.

ESSAY QUESTION STRATEGIES

Essay exams require good organization and writing skills. The following hints will help you do your best on essay questions.

1. Briefly look over the entire test to budget your time for essay answers. They may take longer than other types of questions.
2. Read the essay question carefully. Watch for key words such as “discuss,” “compare,” “define,” etc. A list of these commonly used words follows.
3. Determine the amount of time you’ll have for each question, and give more time to higher scoring questions.
4. Make a brief outline of the major points. In some cases, even if you can’t finish the essay, you can get partial credit for the outline.
5. Use proper grammar, punctuation and sentence skills. Always write complete sentences and begin your essay with the wording of the question. Example: “The five major causes of the American Revolution were....”
6. Proofread your essay and make corrections as needed.

Commonly used essay terms

Analyze examine critically to show essential features

Criticize point out strong and weak points (evaluate)

Compare show differences and similarities between two or more things

Contrast compare to show differences only

Define give a clear, detailed, and precise meaning (who or what, never, when or where)

Describe list physical characteristics but often means discuss, explain, identify or give an account of

Discuss/Comment - present essentials and their relationships

Elaborate develop theme or idea in greater detail

Evaluate appraise carefully, giving positive and negative aspects (critique)

Explain clarify and interpret details of the problem, theory, etc. Present a step-by-step account of or analysis (how and why)

Illustrate explain or clarify by giving clear, pertinent examples