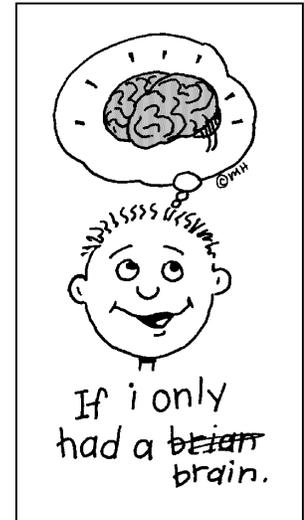


Survival Strategies for Taking Tests

Test Anxiety

Students may experience anxiety about tests and may experience heightened anxiety before a testing situation. A certain degree of test anxiety is normal and may help students prepare more effectively, work more efficiently, and remain focused during testing. Too much anxiety, however, can negatively affect performance. The following strategies may assist students, parents, and teachers in reducing test anxiety.



Student Strategies for Reducing Test Anxiety

- Think of the test as an opportunity to show what you know.
- Relax, breathe deeply and stay focused on the test.
- Remember the test is only one way your academic performance is measured.
- Take a few deep breaths and to relax tense muscles. Repeat throughout the test. This process will help you to stay relaxed and to make more energy available for remembering, thinking, and writing.
- **Be sure** you are well rested before the exam.
- **Eat** nutritious food before taking the test
- **Exercise** will help reduce tension and stimulate thinking.
- **Take** a shower: warm water relaxes some people cold water stimulates others.
- **Allow** yourself enough time to get to class without feeling rushed.
- **Develop** a positive attitude. Tell yourself that you can do this and believe in yourself.
- **Wear** a watch or be sure you can see a clock.
- **Scan** the test and answer the questions you know first. That is a great confidence builder.
- **Don't panic** if you cannot think of an answer and **DO NOT** let that throw off your concentration for the rest of the test. If you answer other questions, you just might trigger the memory for the missed answer.

Before you Begin:

🇩🇪 **Preview the test before you answer anything.** This gets you thinking about the material. Make sure to note the point value of each question. This will give you some ideas on budgeting your time.

🇩🇪 Quickly **calculate how much time you should allow for each section** according to the point value. (You don't want to spend 30 minutes on an essay question that counts only 5 points.)

During the test:

🇩🇪 **Read the directions.** (Can more than one answer be correct? Are you penalized for guessing? etc.) Never assume that you know what the directions say.

🇩🇪 **Answer the easy questions first.** This will give you the confidence and momentum to get through the rest of the test. You are sure these answers are correct.

🇩🇪 **Go back to the difficult questions.** While looking over the test and doing the easy questions, your subconscious mind will have been working on the answers to the harder ones. Also, later items on the test might give you useful or needed information for earlier items. On scrap paper, keep a record of the unanswered items to return to, if time permits

🇩🇪 **Answer all questions** (unless you are penalized for wrong answers).

🇩🇪 **Circle key words in difficult questions.** This will force you to focus on the central point.

🇩🇪 **Make sure to record the answer** in the correct place on the answer sheet.

🇩🇪 **Express difficult questions in your own words.** Rephrasing can make it clear to you, but be sure you don't change the meaning of the question.

🇩🇪 **Use all of the time allotted for the test.** If you have extra time, cover up your answers and actually rework the question. Have time at the end of the exam to review your test and make sure you haven't left out any answers or parts of answers. This is difficult to do under the stress of exams, but it often keeps you from making needless errors.

🇩🇪 **Review:**

Resist the urge to hand in your test as soon as you have completed all the items. Review your test to make sure that you have answered all questions, not mis-marked the answer sheet, or made some other simple mistake.

🇩🇪 **Proofread** your writing for spelling, grammar, punctuation, decimal points, etc.

Specific strategies

- Look for the central idea of each question. What is the main point?
- Statements that begin with always, never, none, except, most, or least-are probably NOT the answer . Underline these or other key words if you are allowed to write on the test paper.
- Try to supply your own answer before choosing an alternative listed on the test.
- Mark an answer for every question.
- If two choices are similar, choose neither.
- If two choices are opposites, choose one of them.
- The most general alternative is usually the right answer.
- When answering essay questions, remember that the objective is to demonstrate how well you can explain and support an idea, not just what you know. Keep the following in mind:

True False Questions

Every part of a true sentence must be "true"
If any one part of the sentence is false,
the whole sentence is false despite many other true statements.

Pay close attention to
negatives, qualifiers, absolutes, and long strings of statements

Negatives can be confusing.
If the question contains negatives, as "no, not, cannot"
Drop the negative and read what remains.
Decide whether that sentence is true or false.
If it is true, its opposite, or negative, is usually false



Qualifiers are words that restrict or open up general statements.
Words like "sometimes, often, frequently, ordinarily, generally" open up the possibilities of making accurate statements. They make more modest claims, are more likely to reflect reality, and usually indicate "true" answers.

Absolute words restrict possibilities.
"No, never, none, always, every, entirely, only"
imply the statement must be true 100% of the time and usually indicate "false" answers

Long sentences often include groups of words set off by punctuation.
Pay attention to the "truth" of each of these phrases.
If one is false, it usually indicates a "false" answer

-  **False answers** tend to be extreme in their wording and true answers moderate.
-  **Usually false key words:** no, never, none, always, every, entirely, only
-  **Usually true key words:** sometimes, often, frequently, ordinarily, generally
-  **When in doubt,** guess. You have a 50% chance of being right.

Multiple Choice

 **Multiple choice questions usually include a phrase or stem followed by three to five options:**

Test strategies:

- * Read the directions carefully
- * Know if each question has one or more correct option
- * Know if you are penalized for guessing
- * Answer easy questions first

 **Answering options**

Improve your odds, think critically:

 **Cover the options, read the stem, and try to answer**

Select the option that most closely matches your answer

 **Read the stem with each option**

Treat each option as a true-false question, and choose the "most true"

 **Strategies to answer difficult questions:**

- * **Eliminate options you know to be incorrect**
- * **Question options that grammatically don't fit with the stem**
- * **Question options that are totally unfamiliar to you**
- * **Question options that contain negative or absolute words.**

 Try substituting a qualified term for the absolute one, like *frequently* for *always*; or *typical* for *every* to see if you can eliminate it

- * **"All of the above:"**

If you know two of three options seem correct, "all of the above" is a strong possibility

- * **Number answers:**

toss out the high and low and consider the middle range numbers

- * **"Look alike options"**

probably one is correct; choose the best but eliminate choices that mean basically the same thing, and thus cancel each other out

- * **Echo options:**

If two options are opposite each other, chances are one of them is correct

- * **Favor options that contain qualifiers**

The result is longer, more inclusive items that better fill the role of the answer

- * **If two alternatives seem correct,**

compare them for differences,
then refer to the stem to find your best answer

Do not "second-guess" yourself and change your original answers.

Research has indicated that your first hunch is more likely to be correct.

You should only change answers to questions if you originally misread them or if you have encountered information elsewhere in the test that indicates with certainty that your first choice is incorrect.

Guessing:

Always guess when there is no penalty for guessing or you can eliminate options

Don't change your answers unless you are sure of the correction

Use hints from questions you know to answer questions you do not.

Play the odds. If you don't know the answer, write something. If you are answering a 4 possibility multiple choice question you will still have a 25% chance of being correct!



Short Answer Questions

Use grammatical clues within a statement as hints for the correct answer

Write your short answers in simple, telegraphic sentences. Packing as much information as you can is more important than literary style.

Short answer responses require no introduction and should be brief and to the point.

Do not fall into the trap of elaborating on a short answer question because you feel confident of your response. Answer succinctly and continue onward.

The Extended Response Questions

Read through the questions once and note if you have any choice in answering questions

Pay attention to how the question is phrased, or to the "directives", or words such as "compare", "contrast", "criticize", etc.

Answers will come to mind immediately for some questions

Write down their key words, listings, etc, as they are fresh in mind. Otherwise these ideas may be blocked (or be unavailable) when the time comes to write the later

questions. This will reduce "clutching" or panic (anxiety, actually fear which disrupts thoughts).

- **Think before you write:**
- **Make a brief outline for each question**
- **Number the items in the order you will discuss them**

- **Get right to the point**

- State your main point in the first sentence
- Use your first paragraph to provide an overview of your essay.
- Use the rest of your essay to discuss these points in more detail.
- Back up your points with specific information, examples, or quotations from your readings and notes

Writing & answering:

- **Begin with a strong first sentence** that states the main idea of your essay.
- Continue this first paragraph by presenting key points

- **Develop your argument**

- **Begin each paragraph** with a key point from the introduction
- **Develop each point** in a complete paragraph
- **Use transitions**, or enumerate, to connect your points
- **Hold to your time** allocation and organization
- **Avoid very definite statements** when possible; a qualified statement connotes a philosophic attitude, the mark of an educated person
- **Qualify answers when in doubt.** It is better to say "toward the end of the 19th century" than to say "in 1894" when you can't remember, whether it's 1884 or 1894. In many cases, the approximate time is all that is wanted; unfortunately 1894, though approximate, may be incorrect, and will usually be marked accordingly.

- **Summarize in your last paragraph.** Restate your central idea and indicate why it is important.

Review:

- **Complete questions left incomplete**, but allow time to review all questions
- **Review, edit, correct** misspellings, incomplete words and sentences, miswritten dates and numbers.
- **Not enough time?**
- **Outline your answers**

 **Read all of the questions before beginning**, making sure that you understand what the professor is asking. **LOOK FOR KEY TERMS.**

 **Jot down ideas** which immediately come to mind. Especially those which include specific vocabulary from the course.

 **Make a simple outline** of what you will write about.

 **Try to write as neatly as possible** and leave some space for added ideas or corrections.

Words to Watch for in Extended Response

 **Analyze:** Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.

 **Explain:** Make an idea clear. Show logically how a concept is developed. Give the reasons for an event.

 **Compare:** Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences.

 **Illustrate:** Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.

 **Contrast:** Show differences. Set in opposition.

 **Interpret:** Comment upon, give examples, describe relationships. Explain the meaning. Describe, then evaluate.

 **Criticize:** Make judgements. Evaluate comparative worth. Criticism often involves analysis.

 **Outline:** Describe main ideas, characteristics, or events. (Does not necessarily mean "write a Roman numeral/letter outline.")

 **Define:** Give the meaning; usually a meaning specific to the course or subject. Determine the precise limits of the term to be defined. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually short.

 **Prove:** Support with facts (especially facts presented in class or in the test.)

 **Describe:** Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities, and parts.

 **Relate:** Show the connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.

 **Discuss:** Consider and debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Write about and conflict. Compare and contrast.

 **State:** Explain precisely.

 **Summarize:** Give a brief, condensed account. Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.

 **Enumerate:** List several ideas, aspects, events, things, qualities, reasons, etc.

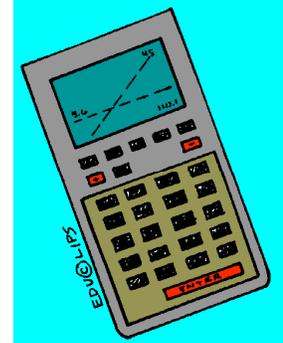
 **Trace:** Show the order of events or progress of a subject or event.

 **Evaluate:** Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the evaluation.

Test taking Strategies – Math Specific Vocabulary

Know the terminology related to your test topic:

-  Simplify - Answer must be in the most simplified form
-  Reduce - Fractions must be in the most simplified form
-  Factor - Find the multiples
-  Solve - Determine a solution to the problem
-  Rationalize - Clear the denominator of radicals



Know the terminology related to tests in general:

-  Explain - Discuss the procedures used to solve a problem
-  Define - State a definition of the term
-  Identify - State the appropriate solution
-  List - State a series of information

During the Exam

-  List all the pertinent formulas, algorithms, etc. that you have learned on the side so that you can concentrate on the problems; i.e., create your own formula chart
-  Scan the exam; note how many questions there are and decide where you would like to begin (this does not always have to be the first problem); it is recommended you do the ones you know first.
-  Be aware of the time; the problems which are worth more in point value should receive more time
-  Check your solutions
-  If there is time remaining, review the entire exam

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Read the problem and underline the words that tell you what to do; ex. Solve, define, etc.
2. List any pertinent definitions, formulas, etc.; you may want to write them on a scratch sheet of paper if you haven't already
3. Begin problem solving
4. Determine the solution to the question
5. Check to see if your solution is an option; if not, rework the problem
6. Double check the solution

7. If no severe penalty is given for wrong solutions, make an educated guess

Free Response

-  Read the problem and underline the given information and determine what the problem is requesting
-  List any pertinent definitions, formulas, etc.; you may want to write them on a sheet of paper if you haven't already
-  Draw a diagram if necessary
-  Solve the problem showing all possible procedures in order to obtain maximum credit
-  Check your solutions
-  Verify that you have answered the original question asked; ex., a problem which includes the length and the width

Math & Science Problems

-  Read through the problem carefully to discern what the question is asking precisely. Be able to state the problem in your own words.
-  List the knowns, the implied unknowns and the parameters of the problem using your own notation. What relationship do the assembled facts have to one another? Do any formulae jump to mind? If so, write them down. Even if you do not ultimately use them, having them on the page that is one less thing you have to recall in memory as you try to decide how to proceed.
-  Draw any appropriate diagrams or illustrations.
-  Does the problem remind you of something from your text or lecture notes? If so, what was the case then? Does it apply to this problem?
-  Mentally round the numbers in the problem so that they are friendlier to work with. A relationship between two numbers might suggest itself if you view .00000199 and .00000398 as simply 2 and 4.
-  A problem can often be broken down into several smaller problems done in sequence. Rather than thinking "how can I get from A to D in one move," ask yourself what are the steps between A and D. Even if you can only work out how to get from A to B, you have still solved one third of the total problem: A to B, B to C, and C to D.
-  Sometimes you can solve a problem by working backwards. Using the previous example, if you have solved for B, but still cannot find C, see if you can solve another part of the problem by working backwards from D to C.

■ If you get stuck, move along and come back to the problem after you have attempted the others. Never erase your work. You don't know what might ultimately be useful to you later, and the instructor might consider that work for partial credit.

■ If you come back to a problem and still cannot find the answer, circle the work that you want the instructor to grade (assuming you have more than one approach on the page). Cross out the superfluous work, leaving it still readable.

■ When you are finished, check your work. If you substitute your answer back into the equation, do you have an equality (assuming that an equality was your goal)? In some cases, inserting the answer back into your work isn't helpful (as when the result is infinity, zero or one). In this situation, ask yourself simply "does the answer make sense?" Is it reasonable?

■ Lastly, always check your units and be certain your answer is in the proper form.

