Strategies for Test-Taking

General suggestions:

- Answer the easiest, shortest questions first
- Answer multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank next
- Your first choice is usually best, but if you believe you misread the question, change your answer
- Then answer short answer and essay questions
- Look for answers in other test questions

Multiple Choice Questions:

* Check to see whether more than one answer may be called for
* Answer each question in your head before looking at the answers – this may help avoid confusion when you look at the answers
* Read ALL answers before selecting one – two answers may be similar, but only one is correct
* IF you have no idea what the answer is, and IF there is no penalty for guessing, use the following guidelines:
  
  When a guess is all you have...
  1. If two answers are similar except for a word or two, pick one of these
  2. If two answers have words that look or sound similar, pick one of these
  3. If the answer completes a sentence, eliminate answers that would not be grammatically correct
  4. If two quantities are almost the same, choose one
  5. If answers cover a wide range, choose something in the middle
  6. If there is no penalty for guessing and 1-5 do not work, just pick an answer – you have nothing to lose!

True/False Questions:

* Answer quickly. These questions usually do not count for a lot of points.
* Read carefully – if ANY part of a statement is false, the answer is “FALSE”.
* Look for qualifying terms, such as “all, most, sometimes, never, rarely” – these are keys to the answer.
* Absolutes, such as “always” or “never” usually indicate a false statement.

Machine-graded tests:

* BE SURE your mark corresponds to the question you are answering!
* Check the test against the answer sheet frequently to be sure you are in the right place
* Don’t leave stray marks – they may be read as answers
Open-book tests:
  * As you study, write down formulas on a separate page
  * Mark (with Post-Its or paper clips) important pages in your book, such as tables
  * If you will be using your notes, number the pages and prepare a table of contents
  * Prepare well – open-book tests are often the most difficult!

Short Answer/Fill in the blank:
  * Concentrate on key words and facts.
  * Be brief.
  * Overlearn – when you have the subject matter “down cold,” you can answer these kinds of questions quickly.

Essay Questions:
  * Find out what the question is asking! If you are asked to compare and contrast, a wonderful explanation is not the answer to the question.
  * Make a quick outline before you start writing.
  * Get to the point – don’t bother with introductory sentences.
  * It can help you get to the point if you include part of the question in the answer.
  * Use your best arguments first.
  * Also:
    1) write legibly;
    2) be brief;
    3) use a pen;
    4) write on one side of the page to make it more readable;
    5) leave space in case you want to add something else later

In Summary:
  • Adequate preparation is the most important aspect of test-taking.
  • However, these skills can help lower your anxiety and allow you to focus on showing what you know!

“Success is the sum of small effort, repeated day in and day out.”

Robert Collier