

Preparing for and Taking Tests

When you take a test, you are demonstrating your ability to understand course material or perform certain tasks. The best way to do well on tests is to be prepared.

Attend all classes and participate, which will help you retain the information.

Do the homework and go to your professor's office hours if you have questions.



Take good notes:

- Write down key information that appears in PowerPoint presentations or that your instructor writes on the board.
- Use whatever note-taking technique works best for you, whether it's key words, bullet points, or something more organized.
- Review your notes after class and review them briefly before the next class.
- Schedule some time at the end of the week to review your notes from that week.



Make yourself a study schedule:

- Use the study guide from your professor or make your own with concepts that will be on the test.
- Estimate how long it will take you to review concepts, and block off that time on your schedule.
- Finish your studying the day before the exam so you aren't cramming.

When you get your test back, review your answers and make sure you understand what you got wrong. This will help you study for the next one.

Here are some review methods you may wish to use:

Summary Notes and Maps

Briefly map out the important ideas of the course. Try making lists and hierarchies for each of these ideas, and show how the ideas relate to each other. Use your creativity to make a visual framework to help you recall these ideas.

Record Your Notes

If you're an auditory learner, you may benefit from recording your notes and portions of text from the textbook so you can review material digitally. Having this information available on audio means you can study while walking or relaxing.

Flashcards

Make flashcards for definitions, formulas, or lists that you need to memorize. Put topics on one side of the card and answers on the other.



Here are some helpful hints to aid you when you are taking tests.

Be well-rested and have some food before your test.

Arrive on time—or even better, a little early. Make sure to bring all your supplies (calculator, blue book, pencils, etc.) and water.

Don't talk about the test with other students. Anxiety is contagious!

Keep an eye on the time. Consider wearing a watch in case there isn't a clock in the classroom.

Read through the whole test before you start so you can plan your approach:

- Are there time limits for each section?
- How are the points allocated? Spend more time on heavily weighted sections.
- Consider starting with easy questions to build your confidence.

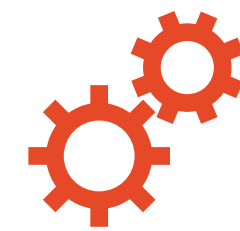
Read the directions carefully. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if a question is unclear.

Focus on your job: the *thinking* process. Let go of what you can't control: the *grading* process.



Do your best to remain calm:

- Take deep, slow breaths. Focus on being present in the moment.
- Use positive self-talk. You've got this!
- Don't panic if you don't know the answer to a question. Skip it and come back later.



It's always better to answer something rather than nothing, even if you have to guess.

On multiple-choice questions, eliminate the answers you know are wrong first, then choose from the remaining answers.

On essay questions, broadly outline your answer first before writing.

Review your test before submitting to check for mistakes. But don't second-guess yourself—research indicates that your first guess is more likely to be correct than your second.

Pay attention to the test, not to others. No need to worry about how your classmates are doing. It's okay if other people finish before you do.

