

Test Preparation and Test Taking

Essay, multiple choice, and final exams

This Workshop Will Cover

- Common test taking errors
- How to prepare for college level exams
- How to take essay, multiple choice, and final exams

Question

What issues are you having with test preparation and test taking?

Common Test Taking Errors

- Did not follow directions for test
- Did not calculate how much time to spend on each question in order to have time to complete all of them
- Did not read questions carefully
- Did not go back and check over answers
- Accidentally marked the wrong item or box
- Changed an answer from correct to incorrect after reconsideration
- Could not recall information

Sources: "Common Test Taking Errors", by Dennis Congos

Common Test Taking Errors

- Did not understand a question and did not seek clarification from an instructor
- Wrote lots of words but did not answer the question
- Answer was disorganized
- Handwriting was illegible
- Made careless errors
- Did not support points with evidence, facts, statistics or proof
- Did not know the subject matter very well

Sources: "Common Test Taking Errors", by Dennis Congos

Keep in Mind:

Test Preparation is not a
One-Time Event.

It is a Continual Process!

General Tips on Test Preparation

- Time Management is key
 - Plan time for recreational activity
 - Treat yourself after the test
- Determine what kind of test it is
 - Essay, multiple choice, short answer, mid-term, final, quiz, etc.
- Choose an appropriate study method for each test
- Begin studying early

General Tips on Test Preparation

- Study in short distributed sessions rather than mass practice (cramming)
 - Repetition and early preparation aids in long-term retention as well as information recall
- Begin your study session by reviewing:
 - Lecture notes
 - If test is comprehensive, review a unit at a time
 - Review textbook readings
 - Reread the textbooks introductions, conclusion, italicized, and bold face headings
 - Review study guide

General Tips on Test Preparation

- Create outlines or concept maps
- Predict possible test questions
- After individual review/study, meet with a study partner or group
 - Have each member bring questions over the lecture and assigned readings
 - Quiz each other and discuss key ideas of the course
- Get a good nights rest
 - The quality of your education often depends on sufficient sleep

Avoiding “Burnout”

- Here are ways to work around a study “burnout”:
 - Look at the problem from a different perspective
 - Go backwards
 - Smile and breathe! Inhale for a count of 6 and exhale slowly for a count of 8 three times.
 - Ask for help. Utilize professor’s office hours, talk to other students, and take advantage of tutoring.
 - Take a break for a few minutes

Test Anxiety

- Recognize and manage what is causing the anxiety
- Anxiety sometimes results from lack of preparation
 - Master: Memorize and know your material
- Efficient test taking strategies can assist in deterring test anxiety
 - Studying for an adequate amount of time
 - Keeping track of time while taking a test
 - Before you begin to write test answers, review all items
 - Do easy items first
 - Implement a positive mental attitude
 - Visualize success

Test Anxiety

- Take practice test
- Certain level of anxiety is okay

General Tips on Test Taking

1. Don't schedule appointments immediately after test
2. Don't study right up until the test
3. Assess time:
 - How much time is given to complete the test
 - How much time you need to answer all the questions on the test
 - Which questions are most time consuming
 - Watch the time
 - Which questions are worth the most points
4. Carefully read instructions

General Tips on Test Taking

5. Jot down any immediate answers or pieces of key information that comes to your mind
6. Answer questions worth the most points first
7. Ask the instructor about any questions that you may have about test directions

General Tips on Test Taking

5. Leave time to review answers
 - Check for: Grammar, spelling, omitted words
6. If there is extra time:
 - Add to or complete answers-remember to complete skipped questions
 - You may feel more relaxed and as a result remember more at this point

Essay Exams

Read and Reread questions!
Look for key words that help you
understand what the question is asking
and how it should be answered

Essay Exams Preparation

- Most essay exams call for “recall” learning
 - You have to know the material without much stimuli
 - Figure out the key general and content information
 - If you're not caught up in reading, don't frantically cram!
 - Review the key (most heavily covered) source for the test
 - Notes
 - Textbook
 - Lecture

Taking Essay Exams

- Write legibly- this will effect your grade
- Think before you write
 - Develop your argument
 - If there is enough time, outline your answer before beginning to write
- Include an introduction and conclusion
 - Begin paragraphs with key points
 - Support thesis and key points
- Qualify your answer when in doubt

Key Words

- Analyze
- Comment on
- Compare and contrast
- Criticize
- Define
- Describe
- Diagram
- Discuss
- Relate
- Prove
- Review
- State
- Enumerate (i.e. list)
- Evaluate
- Explain
- Illustrate
- Interpret
- Justify
- Outline
- Summarize
- Trace

Final Exams

Early Preparation is
the Key!

How to Prepare for Final Exams

- Keep in mind, preparation for a final exam begins the first day of class
- You must be actively involved with learning the concepts
- Distributed practice is superior to mass practice (i.e. cramming)
 - Review throughout the semester

How to Prepare for Final Exams

Ask yourself:

- In what subjects do you have finals? When are they?
- Is the final a comprehensive test or unit test?
- What material will they cover? (see syllabus)
- How do you plan to review for each final?
- How many days/hours will you need to review? (estimate)
- How many days do you have available to review for each final exam?

Objective Exams

Recognize the Right or
Best Answer Given

What are Objective Tests?

- The word "objective" refers to the scoring and indicates that there is only one correct answer.
- Objective test include:
 - True-false
 - Fill-in-the-blank
 - Matching
 - Multiple choice

Objective Exam Preparation

- Ask professor if test items will be general or specific
- Use flash cards to study
- Review notes and text underlining for key facts

Taking Objective Exams

- Read directions for whole test and subsections
- Note number of items on test and set up a rough time schedule dependent upon the amount of time you have available
 - Time is limited-don't spend too much time on one item
- Read each question carefully and assess what information the question is seeking
- Recognize the right or best answer given
 - Again, look for key words
 - Change your answer only if you have a reason to

True-False

- Note if there is more than one fact to the statement, check the correctness of each part. If one part is false, the item is wrong unless there is a qualifying word such as "usually..."
- Words like "always" and "never" tend to indicate that the statement is incorrect, especially if you can think of an exception

Matching

- Check and see if each item can be used only once or more
- Check off used answers
- Match what you do know first

Multiple Choice

- If question is long/complex underline the subject and verb to help you.
- Read all answer options, saying “probable” or “not probable” before making a decision.
- If a question is in the negative, look for all true answers and one remaining false answer will be the correct one.

Multiple Choice

- More general statements are more likely to be correct than specific statements, especially if you think of an exception.
- Frequently check answer sheet with your question sheet to ensure answers and questions correspond

Create a Study Plan

- Plan at least 2 hours of study time for every hour you will spend in class
 - Use the study hour formula
- Set goals for your study session (s)
- Study boring or difficult subject first
- Avoiding marathon study sessions
- Be aware of your best time of day
- Use waiting time
- Avoid burnouts

Where to Study

1. Use a regular study area
2. Don't get too comfortable
3. Use the library
4. Set up study groups

Test Preparation and Environment

- Pay attention to your attention
- Agree with living mates about study time
- Avoid noise distraction
- Notice how others misuse your time
- Learn to say NO!
- Avoid excessive use of "Soft Addictions"
 - Phone
 - Internet (MySpace, Facebook, Gaming)
 - Video games
 - T.V.

Choose a Study Method

- Choose which study method works for you and the subject you are studying for
 - The Study Cycle
 - Intense study session
 - Weekend Review

Question?

- Are you ready to adopt effective study and test taking methods?
- Which test preparation tip(s) do plan to utilize?
- Which study method do you plan to use for your next test?
- Which test taking tip did you find most helpful?