

# Tips for Better Test Taking

## Skills Enhancement & Tutoring Center

**When you take a test**, you are demonstrating your ability to understand course material or perform certain tasks. Successful test taking avoids carelessness. If you have any doubts about the fairness of tests or of the ability of tests to measure your performance, please see your professor or respective department.

**These suggestions may help you avoid careless errors!**

### Prepare:

- **Arrive early for tests:** Bring all the materials you will need such as pencils and pens, a calculator, a dictionary, and a watch. This helps you focus on the task at hand.
- **Be comfortable but alert:** Choose a good spot and make sure you have enough room to work; maintain a comfortable posture but don't slouch.
- **Stay relaxed and confident:** Remind yourself that you are well-prepared and are going to do well. If you find yourself anxious, take several slow, deep breaths to relax. Don't talk about the test to other students just before it; anxiety is contagious.

### Test Taking:

- **Read the directions carefully:** This may be obvious, but it will help you avoid careless errors  
**If there is time, quickly look through the test for an overview** -- note key terms, jot down brief notes
- **Answer questions in a strategic order:**
  1. **First, easy questions:** to build confidence, score points, and mentally orient yourself to vocabulary, concepts, and your studies (it may help you make associations with more difficult questions)
  2. **Then difficult questions** or those with the most point value. With objective tests, first eliminate those answers you know to be wrong or are likely to be wrong, don't seem to fit, or where two options are so similar as to be both incorrect. With essay/subjective questions, broadly outline your answer and sequence the order of your points
- **Review:** Resist the urge to leave 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.

**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.

**Analyze your test results:** Each test can further prepare you for the next test. Use your tests to review when studying for final exams. **Decide on and adopt study strategies that worked best for you:** Identify those that didn't work well and replace them.

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