

TEST TAKING TIPS

BEFORE THE TEST

- 1** Start preparing for your tests when the semester starts. You can do this by reading your syllabus carefully to find out when your tests will be, how many there will be, and how much they are weighed into your grade.
- 2** Plan review sessions as part of your regular weekly schedule so you are able to study smaller amounts more often, rather than large amounts of information a few times during the semester.
- 3** Review for several short periods rather than one long period. You will find that you retain information better and experience less fatigue.
- 4** Turn the main points of each topic into questions and check to see if the answers come to you quickly and correctly. Try to predict which questions will be on the test.
- 5** It may seem old-fashioned, but flashcards may be a helpful way to review in courses that have unfamiliar terms. Review the cards in random order using only those terms that you have difficulty remembering.
- 6** Quickly jot down, on a sheet of paper, the key concepts, theories, and ideas you will need to know for the test. Make sure you can define/explain each.
- 7** **Over-study** for the first test in each class. You do not want to make the mistake of studying too little, receiving a poor grade, and trying to climb back up the rest of the semester. Your goal should be to know more than what is on the test. After the first test, you can gauge the instructor's testing style and define a reasonable study schedule for the remainder of the semester.
- 8** Ask your instructor to specify which topics will be emphasized on the test.
- 9** Review material from practice tests, sample problems, assignments, textbook, class notes...
- 10** Eat before the test. Having food in your stomach will give you energy and help you focus. Avoid heavy foods, or large amounts, which can make you groggy.
- 11** Try to show up at least 5 minutes before the test will start. It's a prime time for the instructor to share more information about the format of the test.
- 12** Set your alarm AND a backup alarm.



DURING THE TEST

- 1** Bring at least two pencils with good erasers, a calculator with adequate battery life, and any other resources your instructor allows.
- 2** Bring a watch to keep track of time, if your classroom is not equipped with a clock.
- 3** Keep a positive attitude throughout the test and try to stay relaxed. If you start to feel nervous, take a few deep breaths to relax or close your eyes for a moment and block out any distractions.
- 4** Keep your eyes on your own paper. You have heard this before, but it is crucial that you avoid even the appearance of cheating, which will cause unnecessary trouble.
- 5** Upon receiving your test, quickly survey its entirety so you can decide how to efficiently budget your time.



- 6** Answer the easiest problems first. This will give you confidence and momentum to get through the rest of the test. Don't stay on a problem that you are having trouble with, especially when time is a factor. Make a notation next to these difficult questions, and go back later to resolve them. Other parts of the test may have some information that will help you out with that question.
- 7** You may want to answer the questions that have the greatest point values first.
- 8** Pace yourself. Read the entire question and look for keywords.
- 9** Ask your instructor for clarification if you do not understand a question. Instructors obviously cannot give you the answer to a question, but they can clarify what you do not understand, making it easier for you to move forward.
- 10** Write legibly. If the grader cannot read your responses, they will most likely mark it down.
- 11** Try not to worry if others finish before you. Focus on the test in front of you.
- 12** If you have time left when you are finished, look over your test. Make sure you have answered all the questions. Only change an answer if you misread or misinterpreted the question, because the first answer that you put is usually the correct one. Watch out for careless mistakes and proofread your essay and short answer questions.
- 13** Double check to make sure that you put your first and last name on the test! Simple, but students often forget.

AFTER THE TEST

- 1** If your instructor reviews the test in class, make sure you attend. Many students choose to skip this class because "nothing is happening." On the contrary, this is a very important class to attend because it will reinforce the information one more time in long term memory. It is an opportunity to hear what the instructor was looking for in the answers, which will help you on the NEXT test.
- 2** When your test is returned to you, look it over and make sure that there are no grading mistakes. Instructors are people, after all, so it is possible for them to incorrectly mark your test.
- 3** Make sure you understand your mistakes. If you do not know the answer to a question, look it up, ask a classmate, or ask the instructor.
- 4** If you are not satisfied with your grade, visit with your instructor and ask if there is a make-up test or any extra credit you can do. Do not ask for favors if you received a poor grade due to lack of preparation.
- 5** Always save your tests and use them as study material for future tests.

Our thanks go out to the University of Minnesota for providing some of the points listed above.