



Test Prep & Test-Taking Strategies

Why Do We Need Test-Taking Skills?

These skills can help you be successful as a student. Also, testing does not stop after college. You may need to take tests to keep your credentials up-to-date in your professional career.

Test Anxiety

To decide if you have test anxiety, consider the following:

- My stomach become upset before important tests.
- My muscles become very tense when I take tests.
- I often have panicky feelings when I have to take tests.
- I “freeze” when taking tests: I can’t think and forget things I already know.
- Worrying about the test distracts me from studying.
- I can’t sleep well when a big test is coming up.
- I don’t ever feel ready for a test, even if I study a lot.
- I can’t relax physically before a test.

Prepare Yourself Mentally

An important part of taking a test, is preparing for it mentally. Some tactics for this are *maintaining a positive attitude*, *learning relaxation techniques* (controlled breathing), *visualizing success*, and *setting goals*. Another approach is *using positive self-talk*. An example of this is saying, “I’ll work on these math problems as far as I can and go visit the Math & Science Learning Center tomorrow evening.”

Resources & Tutoring Centers on Campus

Math & Science Learning Center
402-554-3643 | DSC 107

Speech Center
402-554-3201 | ASH 185

Academic & Career Development Center (ACDC)
402-554-3672 | EAB 115

Multicultural Affairs
402-554-2248 | MBSC 112

Writing Center
402-554-2946 | ASH 150

Criss Library
402-554-2361

Strategies Based on Question Type

Multiple Choice

- Answer each question in your head first.
- Read all answers before selecting one.
- Test each possible answer.
- Eliminate incorrect answers.

True/False

- Read the entire question.
- Look for qualifiers: all, most, sometimes, rarely, always, never.
- Dates, numbers, specific facts.
- Watch for negatives.
EXAMPLE – “Aspirin is not an illegal drug.” Cancel the negatives to turn it into a positive statement. “Aspirin is a legal drug.”

Essay Response

- What is the question asking? (Pay attention to the action verb)
- Outline.
- Get to the point.
- Write on one side of the paper only – this leaves space on the back to go back and write down forgotten points.

What Should You Study?

Notes you took in class and from your textbook

Often, professors will create test questions based on the information they shared in class, so notes for class discussions are a great study tool.

Textbooks and review sheets

Review sheets and the chapter review sections of your textbook are great study guides.

Past quizzes, tests, and graded homework

Professors will often take questions straight off their quizzes and use them in their tests. Also, studying past tests will help you know what concepts will most likely be on your next test.



Before the Test

- Do daily, weekly, and major review sessions so you don't need to cram.
- Use supplemental material offered by the publisher (end of chapter reviews, practice problems, online resources).
- Create study checklists, flash cards, and a mind map summary sheet.
- Take a practice test made by you, your professor, or the publisher.
- Get copies of old exams from professors or friends who have taken the class.
- Consider a study partner or group and set specific meeting times.

During the Test

- Get to class on time, and don't do any last minute cramming.
- Survey the entire test prior to taking it to give yourself time to recall the concepts.
- Take a few deep breaths and relax tense muscles – repeat throughout the test.
- Read directions carefully – understand the format of the test and what the questions are asking.
- Answer easier questions first – this will help calm you down.
- Manage your time and occasionally check the clock.

After the Test

- Take time to reflect on the test and ask yourself these questions:
 - How did you feel about it?
 - How effective were your study strategies?
 - Did you accurately predict some of the test questions?
- Review what questions you missed to understand why you missed them.
- If you did not understand a question or disagree with the answer, speak with the instructor.
- Review your strengths on test-taking and identify areas for improvement to prepare yourself for your next test.

Academic and Career Development Center | 402.554.3672 | acdc@unomaha.edu

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