

Test Preparation Pointers

GENERAL RULES FOR ALL TESTS

- **Scan the entire test** before you start.
- **Read the directions** and make sure you understand them.
- **Know the scoring policy.** Are you penalized for guessing? How many points are questions worth? Are you graded only on the ones you get correct?
- **Budget your time.** Pace yourself. Try for the most points in the time you have.
- **Attempt to answer every question.** Hard questions can be left until last unless they carry a great deal of value and you need more time in answering them.
- **Take questions at face value.** Do not read things into them.
- **Answer questions you know first.** This relieves tension and gives you confidence, thus allowing you to access your memory as you proceed.
- If a question seems complicated or difficult to understand, **put it in your own words or break it down** into understandable parts.
- **Learn from the test.** Often the answer to a question is found in another test question

CHECKING OVER THE TEST

- **Go back over and check** to be sure you answered all the questions. On machine-scored tests, be sure you placed your answers in the right spaces or saved answers. Proofread your essays.
- **DO NOT change an answer unless...**
 - There is indisputable evidence that your answer is incorrect.
 - You had misread or misunderstood the question.
 - You recall information or find the correct answer in the test.

POST-TEST REVIEW

- **Review the test questions** you were not sure of immediately after leaving the room while you still can recall them. Find answers to questions you missed. Find out why you missed them and commit them to memory. Record these answers for future review.
- **Verify the correct answers.** Understand why you got it correct (knew the answer or by luck, etc.) Give yourself credit for the ones you answered correctly and do not dwell on your mistakes.

Test Taking Strategies

Multiple Choice

- **Answer the easy questions first, then the harder ones.** If some questions look unfamiliar. Skip them and return to them later.
- **Pay attention to qualifiers** (“usually,” “none,” “always,” “never”) **and key words** (“except,” “all but the following,” “the best,” “the least,” etc.)
- **Try to anticipate the correct answer** before looking at the options.
- **Read all the options;** eliminate the ones you know are incorrect.
- **Look for options that contain other options.** These are called "umbrella" options because the other options fall within their scope.

True – False

- **Watch for open words such as often, most, or usually.** They are found in true statements.
- **If an "absolute" such as always, every, never, all, none, etc. is present** in any of the options, consider the option false. This can apply to both questions that take the form of multiple choice as well as true-false questions.
- **Unusual sounding statements** are likely to be false.
- **If a statement is more detailed or specific** than most, chances are it is true.
- **Never leave a blank** – you have a 50% chance of getting it right.

Ex. Multiple Choice Questions

The dropout rate in high schools is on the increase because:

- a. all students are unmotivated
- b. some students are disillusioned with school
- c. students never take high school seriously
- d. every high school student has emotional problems

(only b is correct, since "some" is not an absolute)

Ex. True-False Questions

A person who is experiencing anxiety always needs to take medication. – **False**

Without the right intentions, a student will never succeed. – **False**

Most people today have an opportunity to obtain a quality education. – **True**

Matching Columns

- **Read all the items** in both columns first before selecting answers.
- **Mark easy choices first** and eliminate them as you move to the more difficult.
- **Instead of looking at the one-word column first and trying to select a match**, read the column with the definitions or explanations and match those to the one-word column
- **Look for grammatical clues** to help match. For example, singular must match singular and plural must match plural; also, verb tenses must match.
- **The answer should match the language of the test problem or question** (positive to positive, negative to negative, grammar, singular or plural, vocabulary).

Short Answer & Essay

- **Briefly look over the entire test to budget your time** for essay answers and give more time to higher scoring questions.
- **Read the essay question carefully. Watch for key words** such as “discuss,” “compare,” “define,” etc.
- **Do a “Memory Dump.”** Jot down on scratch paper any ideas, facts, figures, etc. which could be used in answering the questions.
- **Make a brief outline of the major points.** In some cases, even if you can’t finish the essay, you can get partial credit for the outline.
- **Use proper grammar, punctuation and sentence skills.** Always write complete sentences and begin your essay with the wording of the question.
- **Proofread your essay and make corrections** as needed with extra-large writing

Commonly used essay terms:

Analyze-- examine critically to show essential features

Criticize-- point out strong and weak points (evaluate)

Compare-- show differences and similarities between two or more things

Contrast-- compare to show differences only

Define-- give a clear, detailed, and precise meaning (who or what, never, when or where)

Describe-- list physical characteristics but often means discuss, explain, identify or give an account of

Discuss/Comment-- present essentials and their relationships

Elaborate-- develop theme or idea in greater detail Evaluate appraise carefully, giving positive and negative aspects (critique)

Explain-- clarify and interpret details of the problem, theory, etc.

Present-- a step-by-- step account of or analysis (how and why)

Illustrate-- explain or clarify by giving clear, pertinent examples

Know your common prefixes, suffixes and roots

- Latin and Greek are at the root of over 60 percent of English words, either directly or indirectly! By knowing certain Greek and Latin word roots, you can figure out the meaning of many words in English that are new to you, whether you encounter them in your everyday reading -- or on the sections of your tests -- which may be a more immediate concern.
- A prefix, affixes to the front of a root word (defined below) to create a new meaning or change the overall meaning of the root.
- A suffix is placed at the end of a root word to alter the root word's meaning.
- Pay attention to any prefix or suffix attached to the root word -- those few letters can really shift its meaning. Putting together all these word pieces can help you reveal a lot about the word's meaning that can help you do better on exams and improve your studying.

- **Common Greek Roots:** (geo) geology, geography (auto) automobile, automatic
- **Common Latin Roots:** (form) conform, deformity (tract) attract, extract (port) export, support
- **Common prefixes:** (dis) disorganized (auto) automobile (anti) anticlimax (ex) extract
- **Common suffixes:** (ess) actress, lioness (fy) amplify, magnify (ful) hopeful, wonderful

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