

Testing Pointers

Preparation

- Make flashcards with the key terms and concepts written on the front *by you*, and the definition, event, and explanations on the back.
- Review your class notes to see what the instructor has emphasized.
- Use the "see it, hear it, say it, read it, write it, learn it" approach to studying.
- Allocate the proper amount of time to study.
- Make a comprehensive outline of the key topics and learn the material.
- Have a condensed outline of headings for which you know all of the relevant material and could fill it in.
- Review the material repeatedly. Do not procrastinate! Do not do all your studying the night before the exam! Actually *study* the material several times throughout the week. Marathon study sessions are often counterproductive.

Practice

The best way to feel comfortable taking a test is to practice test-taking.

- Take practice tests.
- Take them as if they are real. Think of an answer, write it down, and then look at the real answer.
- Take the test, time yourself, and then grade your answers.

Train your brain

When you are on a break in the week or so before an exam, do some training of your thought processes. Read and solve brain teasers or minute mysteries. The mysteries are especially good training because they are presented in short narratives from which one has to deduce the solution. Or think about this old puzzle: 3 men check into a hotel. The clerk says he only has one room and that it will cost them \$30. They each pay \$10. Then the clerk realizes he should only have charged \$25 so he sends the bellman up with \$5. The bellman gives each guest a dollar and keeps \$2. So each guest paid \$9 for a total of \$27 and the bellman has \$2, so where is the missing dollar?

Here is another: You buy a hammer and a nail for \$1.10. The hammer costs \$1.00 more than the nail. How much did the nail cost? You might be tempted to just immediately conclude that the nail cost 10 cents. However, if the nail cost 10 cents and the hammer costs \$1.00 more than the nail, that adds up to \$1.20. That is,

$$\text{nail} = 10\text{¢}$$

$$\text{hammer} = \$1.10$$

$$\text{total} = \$1.20 (.10 + 1.10)$$

So, the nail really costs 5¢

$$\text{nail} = 5\text{¢}$$

$$\text{hammer} = \$1.05$$

$$\text{total} = \$1.10 (.05 + 1.05)$$

Get some good rest before an exam.

You've studied and plan to stay up late the night before an exam cramming or reviewing more, but **don't do that**. Plan ahead, cover the material, take practice tests, and review the material. Get as much sleep as you can the night before an exam and your mind will work better. The night before the exam should look no different than any other night.

Nutrition

Eat breakfast before an exam. A decent meal will help, but do not eat something heavy like pancakes. Eat fruit, yogurt, granola, peanut butter toast, or whatever works for you.

During the Test

Read the Test Instructions

Really read, as they are not always the same basic statements.

Relax

Take a deep breath and slowly let it out. Do it a 2nd time. And a 3rd.

Know What the Question is Asking

Carefully read the question and determine just what it is asking. If you have serious doubt as to what is being asked, check with the instructor.

Pace Yourself

There is usually plenty of time to take the test.

Do Not Jump to an Assumption

Even if the question seems to be basic knowledge that you believe you know well, still look at the question and how it is phrased to make sure you know what the question really is and that it is not the reverse of some process:

For example: Increased X causes Y to increase. The question may be reversed:
Decreased X results in _____ Y, or some other restructuring of a process.

This goes back to pacing yourself. Do not make a snap judgment or answer because then you risk an incorrect determination about what the question really is.

For Multiple-Choice Questions

Carefully read the question, and read the answers, and then rule out obvious wrong answers. Also, ask yourself, "Did another question have a clue about this question?"

For Process Questions

If a process is stated and you are asked to put the steps in proper order, look carefully at the multiple answers. You usually know the first and last steps, so look for answers with those in the proper sequence. Then look at the intermediate steps in those answers to determine which is most likely correct.

For Questions That Stump You

If a particular question stumps you, mark it and go on. Some later question - one where you do know the answer - might give you a clue to answer the one that stumped you. And do try to remember earlier questions for clues to other questions

Don't Keep Changing your Answer

Usually your first choice is the right one, unless you misread the question.

For Short-Answer Questions

Answer everything that is asked for, so read the question carefully. Some short answer questions have multiple parts. Always put something down because partial credit may be given.

The keys to being successful are proper preparation, relaxation, and careful reading of the questions and answers. You can do this!