



# Test Taking Tips

## Before the Test

- ✓ Ask your instructor questions:
  - What kind of questions will be on the test? (Essay, short answer, multiple choice, fill in the blank, true/false?)
  - How many questions will be on it?
  - Do we have the entire class time to complete the exam?
  - What is the best way to prepare?
  - Do we get partial credit for partial answers?
- ✓ Give yourself plenty of time to study.
- ✓ Create a study plan.
- ✓ Review often using short daily reviews, weekly reviews and major reviews.
- ✓ Realize that YOU are in control of the testing situation. YOU decide how you feel! ☺
- ✓ Get sleep the night before the exam—but not a whole bunch more than usual. Get a *regular* night's sleep.
- ✓ Eat a good breakfast.
- ✓ Find out what helps you relax and do it.
- ✓ Arrive early.
- ✓ If possible, show up about 20 minutes early and take out a sheet of paper. Put this statement at the top of the sheet: "I am going to do well on this test (or "...get an A on this test...") because..." and write down as many reasons as you can before you walk into the exam. This will boost your confidence and help you relax.

## During the Test

- ✓ Wait for all verbal instructions before beginning the test—DO NOT start looking at the exam the second it's handed out unless you're instructed to do so. Look at your instructor and listen. The instructions s/he is giving you might not be written on the exam!
- ✓ Relax and visualize your success—see the details of it.
- ✓ Read the instructions as well as all the questions on the exam before you begin.
- ✓ Devise a strategy for answering the questions. Some students like to answer the easiest ones first and then tackle the hard ones. Other students think that they make better use of their time if they answer the hard ones first and then go through the easy ones quickly at the end. You may want to check the time and divide the number of minutes by the number of questions you have so you know that you have so many minutes for each question.
- ✓ Read each question carefully before you begin to answer it. If the question has more than one part to answer, number them or underline them. Look for the key task words and underline them.
- ✓ If your instructor allows it, use scratch paper. Brainstorm and work things out visually on the scratch paper before marking an answer. If you can't use scratch paper, use the back of the test.



# Test Taking Tips

- ✓ If it's O.K. with your instructor, use a pencil or erasable pen.
- ✓ Remind yourself that this is only a test—your success or failure of the exam DOES NOT equal your worth as a human being! Keep the test in perspective.
- ✓ Remember that the more relaxed you are, the more chance your memory has to work. Relax and remember.
- ✓ Give yourself a break. Put your pen or pencil down, shake out your hands, stretch your arms up, take some deep breaths, do visualization, close your eyes, stretch your neck.
- ✓ Realize that you're in control.
- ✓ There's an old Zen saying that says, "first thought, best thought." This is often a good rule of thumb when taking a test. If I had a nickel for every student who's said to me, "I had it right but then I erased it and put something else down!" I would be able to retire and live off my nickels. This rule doesn't apply every time, but it does have its validity.
- ✓ If your instructor gives partial credit for partial answers, write down what you know. When you've finished the other questions, you can always go back to it and try to puzzle more of it out.
- ✓ If you get really stressed, acknowledge it. On your scratch paper, write down that you're stressed, that you can't remember what you need to remember. Then do a brainstorm on it. When we acknowledge our fears and say what they are, we're more able to confront them and master them.
- ✓ Let your nervousness energize you—transform whatever negativity you have about the test into energy that will help you get through it—and ace it.
- ✓ Re-read the test when you have answered all the questions. Make sure you've included everything you know to include.
- ✓ Be one of the last students out the door.

## After the Test

- ✓ Debrief—talk to someone about it. Let it out. Let it go.
- ✓ Reward yourself.