Essay Test Taking Tips

✓ Read the directions carefully. Pay close attention to whether you are supposed to answer all the essays or only a specified amount (e.g. "Answer 2 out of the 3 questions").

✓ Make sure that you understand what the question is asking you. If you're not, ask your instructor.

✓ Make sure that you write down everything that is asked of you and more. The more details and facts that you write down, the higher your grade is going to be.

✓ Budget your time, don't spend the entire test time on one essay.

✓ If the question is asking for facts, don't give your personal opinion on the topic.

✓ When writing your essay, try to be as neat as possible, neater papers usually receive higher marks.

✓ Make an outline before writing your essay. This way your essay will be more organized and fluid. If you happen to run out of time, most instructors will give you partial credit for the ideas that you have outlined.

✓ Don't write long introductions and conclusions, the bulk of your time should be spent on answering the question(s) asked.

✓ Focus on one main idea per a paragraph.

✓ If you have time left at the end, proofread your work and correct any errors.

✓ Budget your time. If you have an hour to write 3 essays, spend no more than 20 minutes on each essay, then if you have time left over at the end go back and finish any incomplete essays.

✓ If you aren't sure about an exact date or number, use approximations e.g. "Approximately 5000" or "In the late 17th century."

✓ If you make a mistake, simply draw a line through it, it is much neater and quicker than erasing it.

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Math Test Taking Tips

✓ Repetition is important in math. You learn how to solve problems by doing them so keep on practice problems but don't do it blindly. Make sure you learn how to recognize when/why you should use a specific method to solve a problem.

✓ Work on practice problems for each topic ranging in levels of difficulty.

✓ When practicing, try to solve the problem on your own first then look at the answer or seek help if you are having trouble.

✓ Mix up the order of the questions from various topics when you are reviewing so you'll learn when to use a specific method/formula.

✓ Make up a sheet with all the formulas you need to know and memorize all the formulas on the sheet.

✓ When you get your exam, write down all the key formulas on the margin of your paper so if you forget them when you're in the middle of the test you can look back at the formula.

✓ Read the directions carefully and don't forget to answer all parts of the question.

✓ Make estimates for your answers... e.g. if you are asked to answer $48 \times 12 = ?$, you could expect a number around 500 but if you end up with an answer around 5000, you'll know you did something wrong.

✓ Show all your work (especially when partial credit is awarded) and write as legibly as possible.

✓ Even if you know the final answer is wrong, don't erase your entire work because you may get partial credit for using the correct procedure.

✓ Check over your test after you are done with it. If you have time, redo the problems on a separate piece of paper and see if you come up with the same answers the second time around. Look for careless mistakes such as making sure the decimal is in the right place, that you read the directions correctly, that you copied the numbers correctly, that you put a negative sign if it is needed, that your arithmetic is correct and so on.

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Multiple Choice Test Taking Tips

✓ Tips on answering multiple choice questions:

✓ Read the question before you look at the answer.

✓ Come up with the answer in your head before looking at the possible answers, this way the choices given on the test won't throw you off or trick you.

✓ Eliminate answers you know aren't right.

✓ Read all the choices before choosing your answer.

✓ If there is no guessing penalty, always take an educated guess and select an answer.

✓ Don't keep on changing your answer, usually your first choice is the right one, unless you misread the question.

✓ In "All of the above" and "None of the above" choices, if you are certain one of the statements is true don't choose "None of the above" or one of the statements are false don't choose "All of the above".

✓ In a question with an "All of the above" choice, if you see that at least two correct statements, then "All of the above" is probably the answer.

✓ A positive choice is more likely to be true than a negative one.

✓ Usually the correct answer is the choice with the most information.

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Note Taking Strategies and Skills

- If the instructor writes something on the chalkboard/overhead or repeats an idea then it is usually a key point and you should write it down.

- Try to use a three-ring binder, it allows for more flexibility in rearranging your notes and any handouts that you may receive.

- Try to sit towards the front and center of the class where you'll be less distracted and can hear the professor the best and have a good angle on any visual aids that may be shown.

- Don't rely on someone else's notes, you may not understand everything that they write down and you'll learn the best by taking your own notes.

- If your instructor talks fast, it may help to bring an audio recorder and record the lecture while taking notes. After the lecture is over you can replay the lecture and fill in any parts that you missed in your notes.

- Do reading assignments or homework questions before class, it is easier to take notes when you know what the instructor is talking about.

- Date your notes. Add titles and subtitles when you move onto a new topic for easy referencing.

- Write down any terminology along with the definition that the instructor may present.

- Make sure that you write legibly, if you can't read them later, they'll be useless. If you have sloppy handwriting it may be wise to type your notes so that they are easier to read.

- If you missed what the instructor said, ask them to repeat it or go to the instructor after class and ask for clarification. If you are in a rush, ask the instructor at the beginning of the next class or try to find the answer from a friend or the text.

- Compare notes with a classmate to make sure you didn't miss any important points.

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