

Effective Test-Taking Strategies

1. **Be prepared** – No test-taking strategies in the world will save the student who didn't study regularly weeks in advance and review before test day. Preparation is key.
2. **Arrive early on test day and take a moment to relax**
 - Having time to take a deep calming breath increases confidence
 - The teacher may provide any additional tips, instructions, or insight just before the test
 - Having time to settle shifts focus to the test and away from the surrounding environment.



3. **Listen attentively to last-minute instructions given by the instructor**
 - It is not uncommon for teachers to alter test details at the last minute.
 - Missing the instructions will increase test-taking anxiety. If you missed them, don't be afraid to ask that the instructions be repeated.
4. **Do a memory dump**
 - As soon as you begin the test, write down information that you will likely need to know for the test and you fear you may forget. (i.e., formulas, equations, dates, lists, etc.)
5. **Read the test directions very carefully and watch for details**
 - Always read all directions and questions carefully to ensure you understand what is being asked.
6. **Plan how you will use the allotted time**
 - Take a moment to estimate how much time you'll have for each section of the test and each question. Allow enough time for more difficult sections or sections that are weighted more heavily in the test grade.
 - Pace yourself so you can complete the test in the allotted time frame.
 - Complete the questions you know first then come back and tackle the problems you're not sure about after.
7. **Maintain a positive attitude**
 - Do not lose confidence or waste time if you encounter difficult questions. Answer the questions you know first and then come back and tackle the questions you are not sure about.
 - If you have no clue about the correct answer, make an educated guess if it will not count against your score.
 - Disregard patterns. It is probably a coincidence if a string of multiple choice answers that you know are correct are "a."

8. Look for cues

- If two answers are similar, they're usually not the correct answer.
- Pay attention to grammatical matching between the question being asked and the answers. If an answer seems right but doesn't match grammatically with the question, it probably isn't the correct answer.
- Look for cues from other questions.

9. Answer all the questions

- Even if you're running out of time, try answering all the questions even if you have to guess except if the instructions indicate docking points for guessing. More often than not, teachers will give partial credit for partially completed questions or if you're able to show your work.

10. Rely on your first impressions

- The first answer that pops into your mind is usually the correct answer. Don't change answers unless you're sure the answer you've chosen is wrong.
- It may be counterproductive to review answers and make changes – especially if you're struggling to get through the test.

11. Plan to finish early and have time for review

- Go back and answer difficult questions after answering easy ones.
- If you are required to complete an essay, review it for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Check to make sure you have completed the entire test. It is not uncommon for questions to be listed on the back side of a page.

12. Consider every test a practice session – analyze your performance

- It takes time and practice to develop effective test-taking skills.
- To determine whether your test-taking strategies are working, take time to evaluate your performance after each test.
- Be sure to take note of where you're struggling. Are you struggling with essays or multiple-choice questions?
- Arrange to meet with the teacher to discuss a low test score and determine what you can do to improve.
- Seek help from the teacher, or tutoring, and examine if your study habits – from class preparation to reading, listening, time management, and note-taking need improvement.
- Doing better is mostly not about studying harder, but smarter.

For specific test-taking strategies regarding essay, multiple-choice, true/false, and nursing exams, please go to the [Comprehensive List of Study Strategies](https://www.cgcc.edu/student-resources/title-v-epic-success-team) available at <https://www.cgcc.edu/student-resources/title-v-epic-success-team>

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