

## Developing Test-Taking Skills

Depending on the type of test, there are specific strategies for each.

### For All Tests

- Start preparing on the day the test is announced. Don't wait—and don't cram.
- Review key chapters, notes and old quizzes. Make sure you know how to spell the vocabulary words. Memorize formulas, definitions, important dates and lists.
- Predict the questions. Make a list of questions that you think the teacher will ask. Examine previous tests you have saved. Study for these questions and practice answering them.
- Use flash cards to practice.
- Read the directions slowly and carefully. Underline or highlight key words that tell you what you are expected to do.
- If you don't understand something, ask for clarification.
- Look through the whole test before beginning. Decide to try one of these strategies:
  - \* do the parts first that are worth the most points
  - \* tackle the hardest questions first, while you are fresh
  - \* do the multiple choice questions first, hoping something in them will help with other sections
  - \* begin with the sections you feel most confident about
- Read each question carefully, paying attention to key words. Look out for words like *never*, *always*, *only* and *all*. These words often indicate that the answer is false.
- Before handing in your test, go over your answers. If there is no penalty for guessing, make sure you have answered all questions.

### Multiple Choice

- Read the question and all the choices before deciding on your answer.
- Eliminate choices that are clearly wrong—cross them out.
- Visualize what the question is asking and use logic to decide which choice is best.
- If the question includes an absolute, like "always" or "never," look for an answer that meets this requirement.
- If one of the answers is "all of the above" or

"none of the above," see if you can eliminate one of the remaining choices. If you can't, you have found the correct answer.

- If two answers appear to be opposites, one of them is probably the correct answer.
- If two answers seem to be saying the same thing, they are probably both wrong.
- The broadest, most general answer is often the correct one.

### True/False

- Examine all parts of the statement. If any part is incorrect, the whole statement is false.
- Beware of absolute words, like "all," "none," "only," "always," and "never." They don't fit many situations and are usually false.
- Look for words like "usually," "generally," "often," "seldom," "some," and "may." By making the statement general (not absolute) these words are clues that the answer is probably true.
- Start by assuming the statement is true. If nothing seems to be wrong with it, stick with that assumption.
- If you are not sure and logic doesn't help, go with your gut feeling.

### Matching

- Read all choices in both columns first.
- Complete the matches you are sure of first.
- See if other parts of the test provide helpful information.

### Fill-in-the-Blank

- Read each statement completely before filling in the blank.
- If a word pops into your mind as you are reading, it is probably correct.

Be sure the statement makes sense when you fill in your answer. Use the number and length of blank lines in each statement as clues. Two lines together mean that you need a two-word answer. If the line is short, the missing word is probably short. If the line is long, the word is probably long.

### Essay

Your teacher is checking three things:

- Your knowledge of the subject
- Your ability to organize and express your thoughts.

- Your writing skills

Before the test: See if you can predict the kinds of essay questions the teacher will ask. If possible, do this with a study group so you'll have a larger pool of possible questions. Prioritize them. Start by studying the most likely candidates. When you feel ready, write a practice essay for each question.

During the test: Read the entire question. Highlight key words that tell you what you need to write about. Be sure your answer covers everything asked for in the question. Think about and outline the points you plan to cover. Include a brief introduction (restating the question in your own words is a good way to start), body (the main points) and conclusion (a summary or final thoughts). Write as much as you can about each point, but don't get carried away on one or two points and run out of time for the others. Stick with your outline and pace yourself. If completing the answer longhand, write as legibly as possible. When you are finished, read your essay over and make any necessary corrections or additions. Check spelling, punctuation and grammar. If using a computer, do a spell-check. If time allows, rewrite (or re-type) your answer.

