

# Learning Café Quick Study Tips

## TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

*Often when students do poorly on an exam, they argue there is a problem with the exam or they simply don't know how to write exams well. In reality, test taking does not just reflect the process a student undergoes when writing an exam. Students who succeed on tests are involved in activities before, during, & after their exams.*



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### What should you do *before* you take an exam?

- 📖 Prepare yourself by reviewing regularly. Learn the material the day you get it. Don't save it up until the night before the exam. Review on a daily, then weekly basis.
- 📖 Use active review tools.
  - study checklists which outline major topics & materials needed in each unit
  - maps, summaries, outlines, diagrams
  - index cards, marginal notes, Cornell notes
  - study groups
- 📖 Prepare yourself by doing a dry run of the test.
  - Ask your instructor what to expect.
  - Prepare possible test questions.
  - Recite & write answers to possible test questions.
- 📖 Get sufficient rest the night before the exam. Cramming all night only makes you less alert on test day.
- 📖 Arrive early, but not too early, with all the necessary supplies.
- 📖 Avoid talking to people who confuse you or make you nervous.
  - If nervous, try relaxation techniques (ex., deep breathing, tense-relax techniques).

### What should you do when *during* your exam?

- 📖 When you first get the exam & *before* you start answering questions, do the following:
  - Pay close attention to verbal directions given as the test is distributed.
  - Immediately scan the whole test. Evaluate the point value & time requirements of each section. Decide which parts of the test you will tackle first.
  - Jot down any memory aids, formulas, equations, facts or other essential material you might forget.
  - Read the directions carefully. Then, reread them. Be prepared to do exactly what the directions ask. Ask questions when unsure about what is being asked of you.
- 📖 When you start answering questions, go for quick points. This will give you a positive start that will build your confidence & earn you marks.
  - Answer the easiest, shortest questions first (usually multiple choice, true/false, matching, & fill-in-the-blank). These questions help you build momentum, stimulate associations, & prepare for harder questions. Then you can move on to short answer & essay questions.
  - In "quick-answer" questions, stick with your first instinct. Don't change an answer unless you know why your first choice was wrong & your second choice is right.
- 📖 Use memory techniques when you get stuck.
  - Recall acronyms, maps, or pictures you used during study.
  - Remember something else related.
  - Think about the general concepts & then work back down to the specific concepts.
- 📖 Watch for answers or clues in other test questions.
- 📖 Watch your time. If you get stuck move on. Make note of hesitant answers & return later.
- 📖 Leave plenty of space between answers. This allows you to add to your answer later, & your instructor may find it easier to grade your work.
- 📖 Check over your exam before handing it in.
  - Make sure your answers are clear.
  - Make sure all questions have a response. If necessary, take a guess!

## What should you do *after* you get your exam back?

- 📖 Listen carefully as the exam is discussed.
  - Learn from your errors.
  - Compare your responses to the responses your instructor was wanting. Make sure you understand where you went wrong, & see your instructor for help if needed.
    - Occasionally, an instructor makes an error in marking. If you feel you have been mistakenly penalized, make note of the question & see the instructor later.
  - Make note of sections or types of questions which gave you difficulty.
- 📖 Check your instructor's marking & addition.
- 📖 Use the exam, if you are allowed to keep it, when studying for future exams.

## HANDLING DIFFERENT TYPES OF QUESTIONS

*When writing exams, instructors make use of various forms of questions. Regardless of the type of questions, sufficient study & preparation are required. However, students may wish to use different approaches when dealing with different types of questions.*

### Multiple Choice Questions

- 📖 Check that the question requires only one answer.
- 📖 Identify key words in the question & rephrase it in your own words.
- 📖 Try to answer the question before looking at the choices. Jot yourself quick notes.
- 📖 Before selecting an answer, read all possible choices & mark each choice T, F, T?, or F?.
- 📖 Eliminate the choices you know are wrong.
- 📖 Mark & come back to questions you can't answer immediately.

### True/False Questions

- 📖 Read carefully – one word can make a statement false.
- 📖 If any part of the statement is false, the whole statement is false.
- 📖 Watch carefully for words which do not allow for exceptions, such as *always*, *rarely*, or *never*. They generally often a false statement.

### Short Answer Questions

- 📖 Concentrate on key words & facts - be brief.
- 📖 Repeat key words from the question in your answer.

### Essay Questions

- 📖 Be sure you know what the question is asking of you.
- 📖 Make an outline or map before writing.
  - It organizes your thoughts so that your writing will be more coherent.
  - It reduces your chances of forgetting ideas.
  - It may earn you marks if you run out of time.
- 📖 Make your position clear & stick to the point.
- 📖 Start with the most important points & work down through lesser points.
- 📖 Double space & leave space in the margins.
  - It allows you to add ideas.
  - It looks neater & may be easier for your instructor to grade
- 📖 If time permits, check your answer for clarity, grammar, spelling & legibility

*For more information on any of the suggestions given here, please visit the Learning Café, located in the library (CE1340) / 403-382-6952 / [learningcafe@lethbridgecollege.ca](mailto:learningcafe@lethbridgecollege.ca)  
Or sign up for a Student Success Workshop!*