

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
Or sign up for a Student Success Workshop!*