

TEST-TAKING TECHNIQUES II: TAKING OBJECTIVE AND ESSAY TESTS

OBJECTIVE TESTS

At the **beginning** of the test:

1. Make sure your name and other required identification is on the test.
2. Read directions carefully and mark key words. Listen for oral directions and corrections.
3. Glance quickly through the test to plan (allocate) your time and to see if your test form is complete and correctly collated.

During the test:

1. Decide on your answer BEFORE reading the choices; then read ALL of the choices before choosing one.
2. Accept each question at face value; don't read anything into the question.
3. Work easy questions first. Mark others for later return.
4. Do what you know first. Clues to the answer for difficult questions may be within the test.
5. Guess unless there's a severe penalty.
6. Change original answer if you have a strong hunch it's wrong. (Don't believe that old myth about your first answer being the right one.)
7. If you are using a separate answer sheet, check frequently to see that you are answering in the appropriately numbered space.
8. Watch carefully! Double negatives may reverse the meaning of questions.
9. In true-false tests, watch out for absolute or categorical statements. They are usually false. Relative statements are safer. Generalizations are usually only partially true. The broader the statement, the greater the likelihood that it is untrue.
10. In multiple-choice tests, narrow your choice by crossing out the alternatives you know are wrong.
11. In matching questions, cross out choices as you use them.

At the **end** of the test:

Check to see if you omitted any questions.

ESSAY TESTS

At the **beginning** of the test:

1. Make sure your name and other required identification is on the test.
2. Survey test and schedule your time for each question.
3. Read all questions before starting to write. Jot ideas down on scratch paper as they come to you.

During the test:

1. Start with what you know. You will think more clearly.
2. Think before writing. Expand the ideas from #1 and make a rough outline.
3. Write LEGIBLY. (This can improve your grade by as many as 10 points).
4. Pay attention to key terms. Make sure you are answering the questions in the way that the instructor intended.
5. If questions seem ambiguous, vague, or too broad, make clear your interpretation before answering.
6. Support general statements with specific examples.
7. Use the technical vocabulary of the course.
8. Use relevant comparisons and/or contrasts from the course, other courses, reading, or your own experience.

At the **end** of the test:

1. Check to see that your answers are properly identified.
2. Reread, edit, and proofread your answers. A few corrections or additions might make all the difference in your grades. Many professors assume that correct spelling and grammar will be used and will deduct points for careless work.