

## Survival Strategies for Taking Tests

### Before you begin:

1. Preview the test before you answer anything.
2. Do a mind dump.
3. Quickly calculate how much time you should allow for each section.

### Taking a test:

4. Read the directions.
5. Answer the easy questions first.
6. Go back to the difficult questions.
7. Answer all questions (unless you are penalized for wrong answers.)
8. Ask the instructor to explain any items that are not clear.
9. Try to answer the questions from the instructor's point of view.
10. Use the margin to explain any items that are not clear.
11. Circle key words in difficult questions.
12. Express difficult questions in your own words.
13. Use all of the time allotted for the test.

## Preparing for Exams

### For Problem Solving:

Go through past homework assignments, lecture notes and your textbook. Then,

- ❖ Copy out problems
- ❖ Mix them up
- ❖ Solve as many as possible
- ❖ Check your answers
- ❖ For any you do not answer correctly, try to find similar problems and keep working on them.

### For Short Answers:

After reviewing your lecture notes and textbook,

- ❖ Make a list of important terms
- ❖ Write down a definition of each term as it was used in the course
- ❖ Think of examples of illustrations of each term
- ❖ Figure out the term or concept's relevance to the course

### For Essay Questions:

Review old essay assignments and exams and select a number of topics that seem central to the course. Then,

- ❖ Write thesis statements containing the subject and three main points
- ❖ Write an outline for each thesis statement (the more detail the better)
- ❖ Write as many essays for each of these as possible, only giving yourself as much time for each as you will have on the exam itself
- ❖ Look over your trial essays, paying attention to areas that could be improved

### For Objective Tests:

(multiple choice, true/false, and matching questions)

- ❖ Study concepts and examples as well as facts
- ❖ Study your texts and notes by actively looking for the kind of material that can be answered objectively (i.e. dates, names, precise figures)
- ❖ Get old copies of exams in the same format. Look for patterns in questions and answers throughout certain disciplines.

Also...

- ❖ Do your best not to cram
- ❖ Start studying well in advance, breaking studying into chunks, and reviews

Originally found at: <http://www.campuslife.utoronto.ca/ihandbook/02002-StudySkills.html>

Originally found at: [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocs/study/exam\\_prep.html](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocs/study/exam_prep.html)

## Writing Exams

### For Problem Solving:

- ❖ Work quickly and carefully
- ❖ Read all questions carefully
- ❖ Budget time according to marks for each
- ❖ If requested, show all work
- ❖ Leave time to look over answers thoroughly

### For Short Answers:

- ❖ Be sure to write enough (questions are usually worth 4-10 marks; figure on getting 1 or 2 marks for each significant point you make.)
- ❖ Start out by defining all terms in the question
- ❖ Think MACRO: relate the terms to the general ideas presented in the course
- ❖ Think MICRO: add supporting examples

### For Essay Questions:

- ❖ Most essays are graded on information, organization and style
- ❖ Read all questions carefully; once you have decided on one, don't change your mind
- ❖ Write a strong thesis statement which contains your subject and the 3 or 4 main points listed in the order which you are going to write about them.
- ❖ Start writing; generally speaking, the more you write the better; include as many specific references (names, dates, places) as possible
- ❖ If there is more than one essay question on the exam, leave a couple pages after each so that you can add more if you have time

### For Objective Tests:

- ❖ Read every word of the question carefully
- ❖ Watch out for qualifying words; statements that use absolute terms (never, always, only, necessary, must, etc.) are often true
- ❖ Cover up answers for multiple choice and anticipate correct answers
- ❖ Watch out for double negatives (There is no time when this is not true)
- ❖ Don't be misled by jargon or familiar phrases used in an incorrect statement
- ❖ Always choose the "best" answer; this is often the answer that uses a word or phrase specific to the course.
- ❖ When in doubt, eliminate all the wrong answers and then guess (unless there is a penalty for wrong answers)

Originally online at: <http://www.campuslife.utoronto.ca/ihandbook/02003-WritingExams.html>

Originally online at: <http://www.mtsu.edu/~studskl/essay.html>

Also...

For all kinds of exams

- ❖ Arrive early at the exam site
- ❖ Leave yourself some time to quickly review flash cards or silently rehearse formulae
- ❖ When you start the exam, read the directions carefully, quickly skim the entire exam and figure out how much time to allot for each section
- ❖ Do the easy questions first, work on one at a time
- ❖ Don't leave early---use the extra time to go over your answers

### **Checklist For Essay Tests**

*Use the following as a guide when writing answers to discussion questions and as a checklist after you have written your answer.*

- \_\_\_ 1. Do I really understand what the question asks me to do?
- \_\_\_ 2. Does the first sentence of my answer repeat the question and forcefully show the reader how I will develop my answer?
- \_\_\_ 3. Have I done preliminary planning of my major points?
- \_\_\_ 4. Do major points stand out?
- \_\_\_ 5. Are the major points supported with examples and facts?
- \_\_\_ 6. Are there clear transitions between major points?
- \_\_\_ 7. Would someone who had not taken this class be able to understand the concept discussed in the way I explained it?
- \_\_\_ 8. Have I completely covered all major points needed to answer the question?
- \_\_\_ 9. Did I stick to the question?
- \_\_\_ 10. Have I concluded with a summary statement?
- \_\_\_ 11. Did I proofread for misspelled words, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, comma splices, subject/verb or pronoun/antecedent agreement errors, and other errors that might cause the reader not to understand what I have written?
- \_\_\_ 12. Is my handwriting readable, and have I left enough space for comments or additions?

Originally online at: <http://www.campuslife.utoronto.ca/ihandbook/02003-WritingExams.html>

Originally online at: <http://www.mtsu.edu/~studskl/essay.html>

## Test Taking Tips for Math

- ◇ Know how to distinguish between the various types of problems.
- ◇ Most math texts have chapter tests at the end of each chapter. Try one problem from each section. Make a note of their differences. Also, write down the first step to each problem.
- ◇ Go back to the section in the text where you are having difficulty. Follow the examples making sure you understand each step.
- ◇ Reading a math book is not like reading a novel. It goes slowly.
- ◇ Don't leave preparing for a test to the last minute. Make sure you leave time to ask questions in class after you have studied.
- ◇ Do as many problems as you can until you feel comfortable with the material.
- ◇ In the class session the BEFORE the test, ask the teacher to please point out any major similarities or differences among the various types of problems you will encounter on the test.
- ◇ Get the phone number of someone in your class who won't mind if you call them with questions.
- ◇ If possible, form a small study group with members of your class and meet periodically during the semester.
- ◇ Math is a cumulative subject. You REALLY need to understand today's lesson to understand the material the next day. Ask questions immediately in class as soon as you don't understand anything. Don't just "let it go" or "give up".

- 1) Check the point total to make sure it is right. Look for mistakes in grading.
- 2) Know what questions you missed and why you missed them. The reason you missed the question is often as important in taking your next test as the answer.
- 3) Study the instructor's comments especially for essay questions so that you will know what is expected next time.
- 4) Look for kinds of questions and tricky questions that the instructor likes to use.
- 5) See if the questions came from the text or the lecture. Concentrate more on that source for the next exam.
- 6) Correct and understand what you missed. This is information you need to know. It may appear on a later test or the final.
- 7) Analyze the type of problems you missed so you can review the strategies for that type of question.
- 8) Review to get an idea of what kind of test the instructor might give next time.
- 9) Review to put information back into long-term memory.
- 10) You want to ask questions while the test is still "fresh".
- 11) Review how you studied for the exam. Look for the better ways.
- 12) Reviewing gives you a good reason to talk to your professors and let them know you want to improve.

