

Tips for Different Types of Exams

Multiple – Choice:

- When you are reading a multiple-choice question, try to come up with the answer in your head before you look at the answer choices.
- Read all the answer choices. Do not be tempted to mark the first one that sounds good, or looks right, especially in math multiple-choice exams. Double check signs, exponents, and variables.
- If you are not sure of an answer, cross out choices that you know are incorrect, and make an educated guess. You might want to mark the question and come back to it. Another question might jog your memory to help you answer this question. If you can mark more than one choice, treat each answer as a true-false choice.
- If two of the choices are similar or opposite, one of them is probably correct.
- Do not go back and second-guess yourself. Generally, your first choice is more accurate. Change the answer only if you are certain your first answer was incorrect.
- If an alternative answer does not grammatically follow the question, it is probably wrong. For example, if the question asks for a singular answer, make sure you pick a singular answer.
- Sometimes guess an answer and work backwards.
- Stay until the end, sometimes the teacher will clarify something as an after thought that may help.
- Tactfully ask the teacher for clarification.

Problem- Solving Tests:

- When you first get the test, write down any formulas, dates etc. that you might forget.
- First, look the test over. If anything comes to mind, jot notes down in the margin.
- Make sure you understand what each problem is asking.
- Make sure your answer makes sense.
- Watch for simple mistakes, signs, variables, labels, decimals, etc.
- Draw pictures or diagrams to help in understanding.
- Watch for problems that are worth more points. Be sure to put something down, even it is an outline, formula, or something that applies to that problem.
- Watch the time. Be sure to use all the time. Allow extra time for problems that are worth more. If you are running out of time, be sure you put something down like formulas, outlines, etc. – you may get partial credit.
- Sometimes it helps to break the problem into smaller parts.
- Let it sit. Come back to it. Be sure to start the test with a ‘friendly’ problem – one that you know how to do.

Essay Tests:

- Read the directions very carefully. Underline key or important words.

- Be sure you understand what is meant by directional words such as name, discuss, compare etc. For a list of words and their definitions check out <http://depts.gpc.edu/~gpcltc/handouts/communications/directionalwords.pdf>
- Watch time and allot enough time for each question.
- Make a short outline for each question.
- Start with a question you understand.
- Focus on the important things.
- Start with a clear thesis statement. Think of the thesis statement as the trunk of a tree and your examples, facts, arguments, and details as the branches and roots.
- Support and evidence should be specific.
- Write neatly. You may want to write every other line so as you proofread, you can add ideas. It also makes your essay more legible.
- Make sure you have a conclusion. Even if you are running short of time, write a sentence or two to tie the main points together and restate your thesis
- Proof read your essays.

True/False Tests: Statements with ‘all, always, every, every, and none’ in them are usually false. Statements with ‘usually, often, sometimes, most, and many’ in them are usually true. It is very important to read these carefully. One word will often change the meaning.

Open Book Tests: During an open book test, you will need to locate information quickly. Prepare by using sticky notes or bookmarks in your text. Highlight the most important information in your notes. Write down all the information you will need on one sheet of paper.

Finally: Go through all tests and correct the questions you missed. You may see these or similar questions on the final exam – these tests will be a good study guide for the midterm or final. Also keep your tests as a record of your grades to make sure the professor has recorded the grades accurately.

Adapted from Xavier University’s The Learning Assistance Center web page: <http://www.xavier.edu/lac/Test-Taking.cfm>

How to Get Good Grades in College by Linda O’Brien

The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing 5th Edition by John D. Ramage, John C. Bean and June Johnson