

Read the Test CAREFULLY

Read the directions and questions more than once, if necessary. Underline key words. If you don't understand the directions or questions, ask for clarification. You don't want to write out a long answer, only to find that you didn't do what the directions told you to do. Even missing out on one word can change the outcome of the answer.



Do a Brain Dump

As unattractive as that sounds, it really is a great habit to get into. As soon as you get the exam, before even reading it, write down the things you are worried that you will forget and are certain are on the test - formulas, key definitions, lists, etc. This way you won't be worried about forgetting them and you are ready to answer those questions.



Test Anxiety

A bit of test anxiety is normal and may even help you out. However, too much can be a bad thing and cause us to “blank out” or get too worked up to focus. The following are some tips to help with test anxiety:



- Be prepared – the more you know your stuff, the less nervous you will be.
- Do practice tests beforehand.
- Use positive self-talk (“I can do this. I am prepared.”) and try to avoid negative self-talk (“I am going to fail! I can't do this!”). We tend to believe what we tell ourselves.
- Take some deep breaths before the test starts.
- Focus on the process of answering the questions and not on the end result.
- Visualize yourself being successful on the test.

If you could use some one-on-one help with testing taking skills, please make an appointment with Raquel Lehto, Algoma U's Learning Strategist.

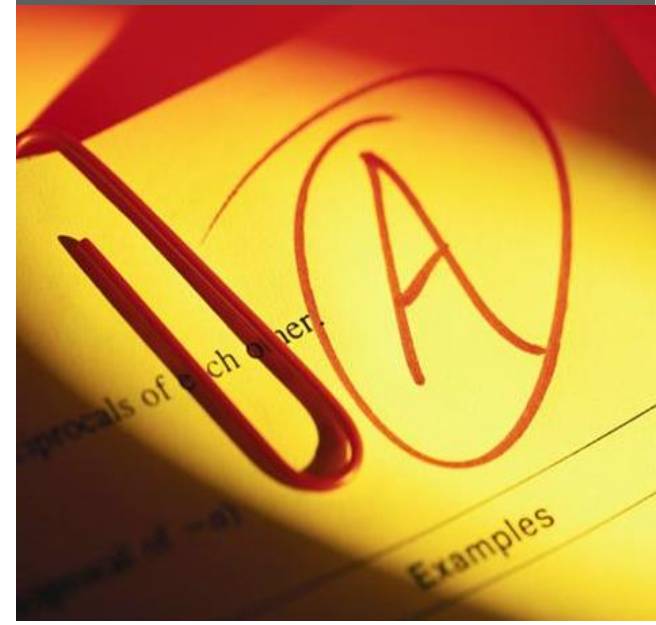
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Test Taking Strategies

*Algoma University
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Time Allocation



Survey the test first. How are the marks divided up? Use this as a guideline for

time. For example, if there is an essay question worth 1/3 of the test, it should take about 1/3 of the allotted time. Do not spend large amounts of time on questions that are worth only a few marks. Use your time wisely to maximize marks.

Never Leave a Question Blank

Your worst fear is realized and you don't know the answer to a question. Don't panic! Think about what you do know about the subject, try to use common sense and logic, and look for clues in other questions. Always write **something**. You may get lucky and get part marks, which is better than zero.



Types of Questions

Multiple Choice

- Read the stem carefully and underline key words.
- Read all the choices thoroughly before choosing – pay attention for words like “not” or “except”.
- Don't choose an answer that is unfamiliar to you. Don't assume that the professor is trying to trick you.
- Try to narrow down the choices – eliminate the answers you are sure are wrong.
- Beware of “absolutes” like “never”, “always”, “everyone” – these are seldom the correct answer.
- If you don't know the answer, put a mark beside the question and move on - you may be able to find clues in other questions.

Short Answer

- Organize your thoughts in your head or on scrap paper before you begin writing.
- Use the marking scheme as a guideline for how much information is required (i.e. a question worth 3 marks probably requires 3 points).
- Pay attention to the words used in the question – “list” does not usually require an explanation, but “explain” or “describe” do.

Essay Questions

- Read the directions carefully: you may have a choice as to what questions you answer, and also to make sure that you answer the question properly
- Underline key words in the question
- Pay attention to point value to give yourself an idea of how in-depth you are required to be
- Organize and outline your thoughts on scrap paper first
- Pay attention to the time
- Write on every second line – this leaves you room to add information and makes it easier to read
- Read it over when you are finished – Does it make sense? Does it answer the question? Did you stay on topic? Have you provided enough information? Is it legible?



Make sure that your handwriting is legible! Many professors will not take the time to decipher bad handwriting, and will simply mark it wrong.