

# **ORGANIZING FOR TESTS**

## **HOW TO READ AND STUDY FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE**

**Main idea:** Test-taking is a skill that can make the difference between low and high grades-- knowing the material is not enough by itself.

### **I. KNOWING THE MATERIAL--organize your reviewing.**

- A. Make sure of objectives, goals of course.
- B. Tie in course "content" with goals; fit details into broad picture.
- C. Use your notes to check knowledge.
- D. Evaluate overall understanding; compare knowledge with course goals.
- E. Imagine yourself as instructor; what themes would you include in test?

### **II. KNOWING THE INSTRUCTOR.**

- A. Interested in broad view or many small details?
- B. Questions straightforward or with hidden "curve"?
- C. More emphasis on certain parts of course than others?
- D. What kind of tests has he/she given? Final will probably be similar.
- E. Find out what kind of final you'll have in each subject.
  - 1. Educated guessing gives "slant."
  - 2. Ask about details (date, length, how graded, etc.).
  - 3. Know as much as possible in advance to guide reviewing.

### **III. GETTING SET--PHYSICALLY.**

- A. Physical condition affects ability to reason.
  - 1. Get plenty of sleep.
  - 2. Avoid exposure to illness.
- B. Cramming is not usually worth the effort.
  - 1. Might help in getting down many small facts.
  - 2. Can be harmful when it keeps you from sleeping.
  - 3. Information you get will disappear almost immediately.

### **IV. GETTING SET--MENTALLY.**

- A. Confidence ("knowing you know") is valuable in test-taking.
- B. Avoid test tension.
  - 1. Stay away from groups of nervous students.
  - 2. See doctor if the problem is severe.
  - 3. Know as much as possible about the test in advance.
  - 4. If you "black out" on a question, go on to others and come back.

5. Don't expect to know all answers.
6. Space out preparation; avoid cramming tension.
7. Fight off defeatist attitude.

## V. TEST-TAKING TECHNIQUES.

- A. General Suggestions.
  1. Bring materials called for (writing tools, etc.).
  2. Read instructions carefully—if necessary, put in your own words.
  3. Make up time schedule; watch for weighted questions.
- B. The essay test.
  1. Analyze entire test.
    - a. Read instructions carefully.
    - b. Set up time schedule.
      - 1) Consider total time, number of questions.
      - 2) Allow extra time for weighted questions.
      - 3) Include time for review.
  2. Answer questions.
    - a. Answer easy questions first.
    - b. Plan each answer—introduction, body, conclusion.
    - c. Give specific facts in body; generalize in introduction and conclusion.
    - d. Generalize if unsure of facts.
  3. Use common sense.
    - a. Write legibly; double-space if necessary.
    - b. Watch mechanics--spelling, grammar, punctuation.
  4. Review answers; correct errors.
- C. The objective test.
  1. Read instructions carefully for each section of test.
  2. Write answers legibly.
  3. Read all answers for multiple-choice questions.
  4. Don't guess if graded right-minus-wrong.
  5. Don't read too much into question.
  6. Don't challenge the instructor's opinions during a test.
  7. Cross out "used" answers in matching questions.
  8. Look for pointer-words in true-false questions (always, never).
  9. Answer easy questions; circle and come back to hard ones.
  10. Don't expect to know all answers.
- D. Standardization tests—tight time schedule calls for special rules.
  1. Read instructions very carefully.
  2. Read all possible answers.
  3. Don't waste time quarreling with question.
  4. Fill in IBM answer to finish all sections of the test.
  5. Don't expect to finish all sections of the test.
  6. Timed tests call for drive; don't waste **any** time.