

TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

Test Taking Strategies

We have all experienced taking an exam and struggling with answering some of the questions. Arming yourself with different test taking strategies helps you analyze the information you've been given and make informed choices, even if you aren't certain of the answer. While the tips below may be helpful, remember the best way to do well on an exam is to study and prepare adequately prior to taking the exam.

Fill in the Blank Questions

- The length of the blank may give you a hint as to the length of answer
- The best clue is the word that comes directly before the blank
- Pay attention to the article before the blank
 - If the article before the blank is "an," then the missing word may begin with a vowel
 - If the article before the blank is "a," then the missing word may begin with a consonant
- If you don't know the answer, skip it and come back to it later. Other parts of the test may spark your memory or even provide the answer

Short Answer Questions

- Be clear and concise (long responses may lead the instructor to think you don't really know the answer)
- Use other parts of the test to help you identify items to include in your answer
- If you don't know the answer, write something; never leave an answer blank as you may still earn partial credit

Multiple Choice Questions

- Ensure the answer options connect to the sentence stem and are grammatically correct. If an answer option does not grammatically connect to the stem, it may NOT be the best correct answer
 - *Sentence Stem: the beginning of a sentence*
 - Example: (Stem) Taking notes is essential...
(Answer Option) it is important for exams (This does not connect well to the stem. Read the full sentence and you will see the answer option does not grammatically connect to the stem: "Taking notes is essential it is important for exams.")
- Eliminate as many options as you can so you have less options to consider
- If an answer option contains a qualifier (*all, always, none, everyone, no one, only, etc.*), the answer is typically incorrect
- Longer answers are statistically more likely to be correct
- If the answer option contains information you know did not learn, the answer is likely incorrect (make sure you are 100% certain you did not learn that information before eliminating that option!)

Long Answer Questions

- Look closely at the VERB in the prompt/instructions (describe, explain, contrast, compare, etc.), and only do what the verb tells you to do
- Create a BRIEF outline (there's not much time to create a detailed one!) so you know where you will place the key information your response
- Reword the prompt and turn it into your thesis that belongs at the end of your introduction
 - *Thesis: a proposition stated or put forward for consideration, especially one to be discussed and proved to be maintained against objections; a subject for a composition or essay*
 - Example Prompt: *Explain why taking notes is essential in lecture classes.*
 - Reworded prompt into thesis: *Taking notes is essential in lecture classes for a variety of reasons.*
- Ensure all topic sentences you use directly support your thesis
 - *Topic Sentence: a sentence that expresses the main idea of the paragraph in which it occurs*
- Edit as you go and avoid erasing/drawing errors, unnecessary gaps on your page, etc.
- If you feel you missed a key fact in a paragraph, make note of that in a separate paragraph by using transitional words and phrases to avoid using arrows
 - Example: *In regards to taking notes as previously discussed, it is also wise to sit in the front row in order to ensure your full attention. Moreover, ...*
- Never include your thoughts or opinions in your response unless you are asked to do so in the prompt. An easy way to do this is to avoid using "I" statements (*examples: I believe, I think, I feel...*)
- Spend most of the time on your body paragraphs
- Use transitions often to help your essay flow easily
 - *Transitions: words or phrases used to relate ideas (examples: similarly, in addition, in summary)*

True/False Questions

- Remember, if even *one* part of the statement is incorrect, the answer is false. So typically, the longer the statement, the more likely it will be false
- If it contains qualifiers, it is likely false
 - *Qualifiers: a word that modifies the meaning of another or typically expresses degree or intensity (examples: always, all, never, no one, everyone, best, worst, only)*
- If a statement contains information you *know* you did not learn, it is likely false (Make sure you are 100% certain you did not learn that information!)

Before Turning in Your Exam

- Do a quick read through to ensure you answered all questions
- Your first instinct is usually correct, so don't change an answer unless you are confident your new answer is the correct answer
- Ensure your name is on it

For more information and support, contact:

Academic Advising & Exploration Center: 262-472-5220, 2054 Roseman, advising@uww.edu