

Master the Exam

General test taking tips:

During the exam

- Review the test when you receive it and carefully read all of the directions. Underline or highlight important instructions.
- Plan your time and pace yourself as you begin your exam.
- Read each question carefully and identify key words in the question by circling or underlining them. Examples of key words are: *Never, Always, None, Sometimes, All, Many, Some, Not, and Few.*
- Remember to focus on one question at a time. Cover the rest of the exam with your arm or your score sheet to help you focus.
- Once you read the question try to answer it without looking at the answer choices. If you can, then select your answer.
- If you cannot recall the answer immediately read *all* of the responses before selecting your answer.
- Try translating the key question parts and responses to basic language – what concept is the professor looking for?
- Cross out answers that you know are wrong, even if you do not answer the question right away. This will save time.
- Do not be misled by unfamiliar terms in an answer – when an answer sounds impressive but not familiar, it is probably incorrect.
- When deciding between answers, do not select one just because you remember it. It may be correct as a stand-alone statement, but it may not be correct in the context of the question.

After you have finished

- Double check that you have answered all questions and that your answers are in the correct place on the test.
- Your first choice is almost always correct, so avoid changing answers if possible.

If you are stuck on a question

- Mark the question you are having trouble with and move on. Remember that later information will sometimes help you to answer a question you skipped.
- If there are two responses that look to be correct, get rid of the response that seems to be the least related to the question. You are seeking the best answer to the question, not just a correct statement. Some responses may be correct, but are not directly related to the question being asked on the exam.
- Breathe! Stay relaxed and focused.

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Basic tips for different types of test questions:

Multiple Choice Questions

The "True/False" Strategy:

- Read the question and decide if it is looking for a true or false statement.
- Label each of the answers as "true" or "false" and eliminate those that do not correctly complete the given questions.

True/False Questions

- Read the question and statements carefully. If any part of the statement is false, then it is a false statement. Mark it false.
- Key words are critical to true/false statements: remember their exact meaning!

Always Only All Usually
Never Often Frequently

Matching Questions

- Matching questions usually give you two lists of information and ask you to match items from one list with items on the other.
- Match the easiest things first, the ones you recall the most about.
- Once you have matched an item, cross out its number or letter, so you know it has been completed.
- If you are unsure on some remaining items, eliminate pairs that *do not* make sense and make your best guess.

Essay/Short-Answer Questions

Read the directions carefully and create a brief outline based on the directions and what you are planning to include. This will help you organize your thoughts and ensure that nothing is left out.

- Determine how much time you will need to allot to each question.
- If part of an objective exam, pay attention to amount of space provided and point values for these questions. This will guide you on how much information to provide.
- Note the following key words: analyze, compare, contrast, describe, explain, identify, summarize... Make sure you understand exactly what is being asked.
- Begin with a topic sentence, followed by a summary. Include examples and be specific.
- Answer questions completely, but try not to ramble. Keep answers short and to the point.
- Check that correct spelling, grammar and sentence completion are part of each answer.
- Proofread and ask yourself whether you have answered the question being asked. If not, try to expand or insert the necessary information.

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Essay/Short-Answer Key Words

The following words are commonly found in essay questions, and understanding them is essential to success. Underline the words when you see them in a test question.

Analyze: Break into separate parts & discuss, examine, or interpret each part.

Contrast: Show differences. Set in opposition.

Compare: Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences.

Criticize: Make judgments. Evaluate comparative worth. Criticize often involves analysis.

Define: Give the meaning; usually a meaning specific to the course or subject. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually short.

Describe: Give a detailed account; make a picture with words; list characteristics, qualities, and parts.

Discuss: Consider and debate or argue about the pros and cons of an issue. Write about any conflict. Compare and contrast.

Enumerate: List several ideas, aspects, events, things, qualities, reasons, etc.

Evaluate: Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the evaluation.

Explain: Make an idea clear. Show logically how a concept is developed. Give the reason for an event.

Illustrate: Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.

Interpret: Comment upon, give examples, describe relationships. Explain the meaning. Describe, then evaluate.

Outline: Describe main ideas, characteristics or events. This does not necessarily mean write a Roman numeral / Letter outline.

Prove: Support with facts (especially facts presented in class or in the text).

State: Explain precisely.

Relate: Show the connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.

Summarize: Give a brief, condensed account. Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.

Trace: Show the order of events or progress of a subject or event.