

## **Preparing for and Taking Exams**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this workshop is to help students better prepare for exams and to relax any anxiety students may have when taking exams.

*This workshop will teach you:*

1. How to prepare for exams
2. How to handle test anxiety.
3. Tips on answering essay, multiple-choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and matching questions.
4. How to analyze after the exam.

### **HAVING THE RIGHT APPROACH**

A. Be prepared

- Taking good notes
- Go to class regularly

B. Good study habits

- Includes time management

C. Just Do It

- Complaining wastes time and energy

D. Take a break every hour

- Stretch, walk, change positions
- Helps your concentration when you go back to studying.

### **PREPARING FOR EXAMS**

A. First review material throughout the semester.

B. As you review, concentrate on key concepts.

C. Try to predict which questions the instructor will be asking.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR PREDICTING EXAM QUESTIONS**

A. Look for terms and their definitions (found in bold and italic print)

B. Study items in list form; they're often used as essay questions.

C. Pay close attention to text introduced by "the main reason" or "the most important cause"

D. Ask your instructor what type of information will be on the exam

### **BEFORE THE EXAM**

A. Spend the night before the exam making final review.

- Go right to bed without watching TV. (interferes with what you've learned)
- Get up 1/2 hour early and review notes again.

B. Take all necessary materials (pen, dictionary, eraser, etc.)

C. Be on time

- You'll feel more relaxed.

D. Sit in a quiet spot.

- Some people talk a lot before the exam

E. Rest and Relax

- Don't lose sleep the night before
- Sleep will help you think more clearly.

F. Eat properly

- Keep your energy level high by eating less but more frequently
- Stick to "good" foods: fruits, veggies, and milk
- Avoid caffeine, greasy fat foods, and heavy sugar products

### **HOW TO CURE EXAM NERVES**

*Exam nerves are common. There are 6 steps to ease your nerves.*

A. Exam nerves are not a total loss.

- You perform better when you are a little nervous.

B. Avoid flunking yourself

- If you think you're a failure you probably will be.
- Give yourself a chance.
- If you fall into this habit, recognize it and give yourself the chance you deserve.

C. Spend your energy on the exam, not fear.

- Try to focus on the questions.

D. If the first questions difficult, don't be discouraged.

- This doesn't mean the rest of the questions are difficult.

E. Use the aids in the exam room

F. If you draw a blank, try to relax

- Tense and relax your feet, calves, fist, and arms.

### **IMPORTANT POINTS WHILE TAKING THE EXAM**

A. Read directions carefully

- Follow them exactly
- Many students make careless mistakes

B. Answer the questions worth the most points first

- Develop a plan from there
- Certain amount of time for each question

C. Stick to your time schedule

- Don't cheat yourself out of time
- Stay the full time
- Don't allow other students to influence your speed

D. Answer all questions unless otherwise specified

- If there is no penalty for wrong answers, then guess
- This is better than leaving blanks.

E. Ask the instructor to explain any test item or direction that is unclear.

F. Don't put confusing questions into your own terms

- Don't change the meaning of the questions

### **PREPARING FOR THE ESSAY QUESTIONS**

- Essay questions are important
- Count for more points on the exam
- The instructor often tests basic ideas of the subject.
- Info such as: causes, ideas, examples, enumeration
- To study, anticipate questions form example and enumerations

## **HINTS ON ANSWERING ESSAY QUESTIONS**

A. Set up a time schedule

- If 6 questions are to be answered in 60 minutes, allow 7 or 8 minutes per question
- 6 incomplete answers will probably give you more credit than 3 complete questions.

B. Read through the questions once

- Write down key words in the margins when they come to mind
- May be blocked later

C. Always do essay questions first

D. Outline your answer before writing

- Instructors are influenced by completeness and clarity of an organized answer

E. Write an intro and a summary

- Intro has main points
- Summary is paraphrasing of the intro

F. Leave blank spaces at the end of each answer.

- You may want to add something later.

G. Write neatly and clearly.

- Instructors react positively to neat papers

H. Reread your paper

- Check for misspell words, omit words, miswrite dates and questions

## **HINTS ON ANSWERING MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS**

*Study all terms, definitions, and dates*

A. M-C are simply sophisticated T/F questions

B. Choose the best answer

- You're not always given a perfect or correct answer

C. Cross out answers you know are incorrect

D. Read all of the possible answers.

- Sometimes the answer is "all of the above"

E. Probe your memory on difficult questions.

- Read question first and read and reread choices until the best answer comes to mind.
- Try not to look at the answers first when returning to difficult questions

F. Be alert to clues to correct answers

- Sometimes longest sentence is correct
- Most complete and inclusive answer is often correct
- Most answers are placed in the middle
- If two items have opposite meanings, one is usually correct.
- Answer with qualifiers (generally, probably, some, sometimes) are usually correct

G. Be alert to clues to incorrect answers

- If two answers are close in meaning both are probably incorrect.
- Answers with absolute words (all, always, everyone, never) are usually incorrect

### **HINTS ON ANSWERING T/F QUESTIONS**

A. False answers imply a statement is absolute

- Absolute answers (Only one way)
- Clues to look for: all, always, everyone, no one, nobody, none, never, impossible

B. True answers imply the statement is qualified

- Generally, probably, most, often, some, sometimes, usually, frequently

### **HINTS ON ANSWERING FILL-IN-THE-BLANK**

A. If more than one response comes to mind write them down in the margin

- Later choose the right one.

B. Answer should fit logically and grammatically in to the slot in the sentence.

C. Not all answers only require one word

- Write in words you feel necessary unless otherwise stated by the instructor
- Partial credit may be given to words that express the necessary info.

### **HINTS ON ANSWERING MATCHING QUESTIONS**

A. Read both columns before answering

- Have an understanding of the alternative

B. Start with the easiest item

- Focus on one item and look for its match

C. Cross out item as you use them.

D. Watch out for extra items in one column

- An answer may be applied to more than one item
- Read directions carefully

### **WHEN YOU HAVE TO GUESS**

*There are 14 hints to use when your knowledge and logic give out.*

A. An alternative that is much longer or much shorter tends to be correct.

B. When an alternative grammatically doesn't make sense, it's usually wrong.

C. M-C and T/F questions with words like generally, probably, etc., tend to be correct or true.

D. Alternatives and T/F questions with words like all, only, never, etc., tend to be or false.

E. If two alternatives are the same except for one words, one of them tends to be correct.

F. Partly true or partly false answers tend to be false

G. "None of the above" is usually wrong

H. If you're sure two alternatives are correct check for an "all of the above" alternative

I. For matching questions, mark out items used unless otherwise stated in the directions.

J. For M-C questions, eliminate obviously wrong answers, then select from the remaining.

K. If a M-C question states to choose more than one answer, treat each alternative as a T/F statement

L. Read all of the alternatives in M-C question, there may be an "all of the above" answer.

M. For Fill-in-the-Blank, put in the best answer even if it doesn't fit the number of dashes

- Use a substitute word.

N. Bring to the attention of the instructor any questions that can be taken two ways

### **ANALYZING AFTER THE EXAM**

- You should try to figure out what went wrong in the exam right after you've taken it.
- There are specific steps you can take to improve your performance.
- Ask yourself the following questions to pinpoint the difficulties you may be having.