

## Test Preparation Tips

While most students focus primarily on understanding or memorizing the content of the tested subject, research shows us that as much as 60% of your total test score can be based off your ability to take a test (test taking skills.) In fact, the majority of people who score poorly or fail tests do so, not because they don't know the content but because they do not understand how to take the test. As a result, XCEL Testing Solutions is committed to helping you learn these valuable test taking skills and strategies you will need for success.

The following section will help you learn more about

1. Reducing Test Anxiety
2. Preparing For A Major Test
3. Learning The Different Question Formats
4. What to Do During a Test

### REDUCING TEST ANXIETY

**Test anxiety is when a student excessively worries about doing well on a test. This can become a major hindrance on test performance and cause extreme nervousness and memory lapses among other symptoms. The following are tips on reducing test taking anxiety.**

- ✓ Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test taking anxiety.
- ✓ Space out your studying over a few days or weeks and continually review class material. Don't try to learn everything the night before.
- ✓ Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test.
- ✓ Exercising for a few days before the test will help reduce stress.
- ✓ Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- ✓ Show up to class early so you won't have to worry about being late.
- ✓ Chew gum (if allowed) during the test to help relieve test anxiety.
- ✓ Stay relaxed, if you begin to get nervous take a few deep breaths slowly to relax yourself and then get back to work.
- ✓ Read the directions slowly and carefully.
- ✓ If you don't understand the directions on the test, ask the facilitator to explain it to you.
- ✓ Skim through the test so that you have a good idea how to pace yourself.

- ✓ Write down important formulas, facts, definitions and/or keywords in the margin first so you won't worry about forgetting them.
- ✓ Do the simple questions first to help build up your confidence for the harder questions.
- ✓ Don't worry about how fast other people finish their test; just concentrate on your own test.
- ✓ If you don't know an answer to a question skip it for the time being (come back to it later if you have time), and remember that you don't have to always get every question right to do well on the test.
- ✓ Focus on the question at hand. Don't let your mind wander on other things.

## PREPARING FOR A MAJOR TEST

- ✓ Preparation for your first test should begin on the first day you have access to your online class; this includes paying attention during instruction, taking good notes, studying, completing required assignments and reviewing study materials on a regular basis.
- ✓ Budget your time, make sure you have sufficient time to study so that you are well prepared for the test.
- ✓ Go to review sessions, pay attention to hints that the instructor may give about the test. Take notes and ask questions about items you may be confused about.
- ✓ Ask the instructor to specify the areas that will be emphasized on the test.
- ✓ Go over any material from practice tests, sample questions, review material, the textbook, class notes...
- ✓ Eat before a test. Having food in your stomach will give you energy and help you focus but avoid heavy foods which can make you groggy.
- ✓ Don't try to pull an all nighter. Get at least 3 hours of sleep before the test (normally 8 hours of sleep a night is recommended but if you are short on time, get at least 3 hours so that you'll be well rested enough to focus during the test).
- ✓ Put the main ideas/information/formulas onto a sheet that can be quickly reviewed many times, this makes it easier to retain the key concepts that will be on the test.
- ✓ Try to show up at least 10 minutes before the test will start.
- ✓ Set your alarm and have a back-up alarm set as well.
- ✓ Go to the bathroom before walking into the exam room. You don't want to waste any time worrying about your bodily needs during the test

## WHAT TO DO DURING A TEST

- ✓ Keep a positive attitude throughout the whole test and try to stay relaxed. If you start to feel nervous take a few deep breaths to relax.
- ✓ Keep your eyes on your own paper, you don't want to appear to be cheating and cause unnecessary trouble for yourself.
- ✓ When you first receive your test, do a quick survey of the entire test so that you know how to efficiently budget your time.
- ✓ Do the easiest problems first. Don't stay on a problem that you are stuck on, especially when time is a factor.
- ✓ Pace yourself, don't rush. Read the entire question and pay attention to the details.
- ✓ Always read the whole question carefully. Don't make assumptions about what the question might be.
- ✓ If you don't know an answer, skip it. Go on with the rest of the test and come back to it later. Other parts of the test may have some information that will help you out with that question.
- ✓ Don't worry if others finish before you. Focus on the test in front of you.
- ✓ If you have time left when you are finished, look over your test. Make sure that you have answered all the questions. Only change an answer if you misread or misinterpreted the question because the first answer that you put is usually the correct one.

## Questions Formats

During this test you will experience several types of question formats. It is imperative that you familiarize yourself with each of these question formats so you are prepared for success.

### Multiple choice questions

Multiple choice questions usually include a phrase or stem followed by three to five options:

Test strategies:

- Read the directions carefully
  - Know if each question has one or more correct option
  - Know if you are penalized for guessing
  - Know how much time is allowed (this governs your strategy)
- Preview the test
  - Read through the test quickly and answer the easiest questions first
  - Mark those you think you know in some way that is appropriate

- Read through the test a second time and answer more difficult questions  
You may pick up cues for answers from the first reading, or become more comfortable in the testing situation
- If time allows, review both questions and answers  
It is possible you mis-read questions the first time

### Answering options

Improve your odds, think critically:

### Cover the options, read the stem, and try to answer

Select the option that most closely matches your answer

### Read the stem with each option

Treat each option as a true-false question, and choose the "most true"

### Strategies for answering difficult questions:

1. **Eliminate options you know to be incorrect**  
If allowed, mark words or alternatives in questions that eliminate the option
2. **Give each option of a question the "true-false test:"**  
This may reduce your selection to the best answer
3. **Question options that grammatically don't fit with the stem**
4. **Question options that are totally unfamiliar to you**
5. **Question options that contain negative or absolute words.**  
Try substituting a qualified term for the absolute one.  
For example, *frequently* for *always*; or *typical* for *every* to see if you can eliminate an option
6. **"All of the above:"**  
If you know two of three options seem correct, "all of the above" is a strong possibility
7. **Number answers:**  
toss out the high and low and consider the middle range numbers
8. **"Look alike options"**  
probably one is correct; choose the best but eliminate choices that mean basically the same thing, and thus cancel each other out
9. **Double negatives:**  
Create the equivalent positive statement
10. **Echo options:**  
If two options are opposite each other, chances are one of them is correct

**11. Favor options that contain qualifiers**

The result is longer, more inclusive items that better fill the role of the answer

**12. If two alternatives seem correct,**

compare them for differences,  
then refer to the stem to find your best answer

**Guessing:**

- **Always guess when there is no penalty**  
for guessing or you can eliminate options
- **Don't guess if you are penalized for guessing**  
and if you have no basis for your choice
- **Use hints from questions you know**  
to answer questions you do not.
- **Change your first answers**  
when you are sure of the correction, or other cues in the test cue you to change.

**Remember that you are looking for the best answer,**

not only a correct one, and not one which must be true all of the time, in all cases, and without exception.

**QUANTITATIVE FORMAT QUESTIONS**

- ✓ Repetition is important when answering quantitative questions. You learn how to solve problems by doing them so keep on practice problems but don't do it blindly. Make sure you learn how to recognize when/why you should use a specific method to solve a problem.
- ✓ Work on practice problems for each topic ranging in levels of difficulty.
- ✓ When practicing, try to solve the problem on your own first then look at the answer or seek help if you are having trouble.
- ✓ Mix up the order of the questions from various topics when you are reviewing so you'll learn when to use a specific method/formula.
- ✓ Make estimates for your answers... e.g. if you are asked to answer  $48 \times 12 = ?$ , you could expect a number around 500 but if you end up with an answer around 5000, you'll know you did something wrong.
- ✓ Check over your test after you are done with it. If you have time, Look for careless mistakes such as making sure the decimal is in the right place, that you read the directions correctly, that you copied the numbers correctly, that you put a negative sign if it is needed, that your arithmetic is correct and so on.