Test-Taking Strategies and Suggestions

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It's true! You can achieve higher exam scores by improving your test-taking skills. Scholars in the field of educational psychology have observed, formulated, and tested a number of principles which can help you. Here are some of the most valuable strategies and suggestions for succeeding on tests:

**Begin studying for your first test on the very first day of class.**

There's no substitute for really "owning" the information, and the longer you work with it, the more you'll be able to do with it.

**Know exactly what's covered on the test.**

If you don't know what will be on the test, ASK!

**Don't try to cram the night before a test.**

Research shows that little of the "crammed" information is really retained the next day. (Thorough review is a *lot* better!)

**Look over every part of the test as soon as you receive it.**

You'll be able to proceed systematically and budget your time if you know where the harder parts of the test are.

**Read the directions for each section carefully.**

If you know exactly what you're supposed to do on the test, you'll be able to accomplish it faster.

**Do the easiest, "sure-thing" questions first.**

The easy questions will help boost your confidence!

**Attack the hardest parts of the test next.**

You can return to the hard parts later if you start to get bogged down.

**Complete the rest of the test before starting a second run-through.**

It's easy to forget something when you're under time pressure.
Try to put an answer down for everything.
   In some cases you'll receive credit for being on the right track.

Read questions and fill-ins carefully.
   They usually contain essential and helpful clues.

Write helpful notes in the margins, like equations, rules, diagrams, etc.,
   particularly if you've worked hard to memorize them.
   Doing so reduces the load on your memory.

Do calculations or analysis mechanically, reciting the steps to yourself as you go.
   You'll often catch simple errors right away.

Show your work where it's appropriate.
   Sometimes the steps leading to an answer are just as important as the final result.

If in doubt, go with your first impression.
   You can change your answer later upon more reflection.

With multiple-choice questions, eliminate obviously wrong options right way and choose among the remaining ones.
   Your odds are better!

Use the test itself as a source of hints.
   Information in one section can help you in another.

Check each section of the test after you've completely finished.
   Often you'll catch simple mistakes or better answers will occur to you after you've seen the whole test.

Relax!
   You'll actually do better if you're not worrying about the outcome!