Test-Taking:
Tips, Tricks, and Tactics

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Outline

- Test preparation
- Managing test anxiety
- Test-taking strategies
- Using feedback to improve your future performance
Doing the prep work
Getting the most out of your study session

- Study Skills
- "Studying"
- Goal-setting
- Environment
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Nutrition

no better place to heal...
Sleep

- Poor sleep hygiene (erratic sleep schedule, shortened sleep, and poor sleep quality) has been negatively associated with academic performance (American Academy of Sleep Medicine)

- Students with sleep disorders are more likely to have poor grades and mental health problems than students without sleep disorders (American Academy of Sleep Medicine)
Exercise and Nutrition

- Regular exercise has been shown to benefit cognition (Guiney & Machado, 2013; Kirk-Sanchez & McGough, 2014).

- Increasing research demonstrates the importance of diet in cognition (Gomez-Pinilla, 2008; Walton, 2012).

- Alcohol negatively affects memory, problem-solving, visuospatial skills.
Managing your Environment

- Reduce distractions
- Get comfortable but not so comfortable that you doze off
- Some evidence that if you have ADHD, you do better on tasks when allowed to fidget
Study Skills

- Study at the same time and in the same place every day
- Study at the time of day when you are most alert
- Take breaks
- Study to the type of learner that you are
Study Skills

- Answer practice questions (Dunlosky et al, 2013)
- Study over time rather than all at once (Dunlosky et al, 2013)
- Elaborate on how new information is related to known information and why a fact is true
- Repetition is key
Setting Goals

- Write it down
- Make it realistic, achievable, and personal
- Make it positive and specific
- Set a time-frame
- Break it down
- Find supports
- Monitor your progress
Sample Goal

- Desire: a better grade in my history class
- Goal: I will study history for 45 minutes every day until my final exam in 1 month. I will set a reminder on my phone and at the end of each week, I will reward myself by spending time with my friends.
Managing Test Anxiety
What is anxiety?

- Normal human response to danger
- Symptoms reflect the fight or flight reflex
How might you experience anxiety?

- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heart beat
- Sweating
- Trouble concentrating
- Cognitive and attentional bias
- Sense of panic or doom
- Nausea or butterflies in your stomach
- Physical tension
Finding the sweet spot

Yerkes-Dodson “Law”

Optimal arousal
Optimal performance

Impaired performance because of strong anxiety

Increasing attention and interest

Performance

Strong

Weak

Arousal

Low

High
How can I recognize anxiety and what can I do about it?

- STOP
- Visualization
- Relaxation breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Balanced thoughts
- Distraction
Diaphragmatic Breathing

- Trachea
- Bronchi
- Intercostal muscles
- Diaphragm

Thorax

Abdomen

no better place to heal...
Diaphragmatic Breathing

- Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your abdomen
- Breathe in slowly feel the lower hand rise
- Exhale and feel the lower hand fall
- The hand on your upper chest will remain relatively still throughout the process

Practice with the Breathe2Relax app
Runners, take your mark
It is test day, now what?!

- Do not alter your regular routine
- Make sure to get something to eat
- Make sure you have all your materials
- Bring water and a snack if allowed

- Arrive early and take a moment to get organized
- Take a deep breath
- Plan your time – how will you use it?
- Maintain a positive attitude
Test Day

- Listen to any last minute instructions
- Read the test directions very carefully
- Rely on your first impressions
- Plan to finish early and time for review
Now I have to answer the questions!

- Should I guess?
- Can I answer questions in any order?
- Are there trick questions on the test?
- Are there answer patterns on the test?
- Can I write on the scratch paper I am given?
Smart Tips for Taking Tests

- Do a quick ‘mind dump’ of information
- Get the ‘big picture’ – survey the entire test before starting
- Answer the easiest questions first – help yourself calm down
- Skip the questions you find extremely difficult – go back later once you’ve successfully answered others
- Keep track of the time
- Read all the of possible answers before selecting one
- Check your answers
- Don’t worry about your score when you are taking the test
- Use your energy to take the test, not to get frustrated by it

ASHA, 2015
Multiple Choice

• Look for the central/main idea of the question. What is the main point?
• Statements that begin with always, never, none, except, most or least – are probably not the answer.
• Underline key words if allowed to write in the test
• Try to supply your own answer before looking at the alternative/list of choices
• Eliminate unlikely answers first
• Select answers numbered answers from the middle range, not the extremes
• Mark an answer for all questions

Bucks, 1997
Multiple Choice

- If you have to guess:
  - The length of the choice can be a clue. Choose the longest
  - If two choices are similar, choose neither
  - If two choices are opposites, choose one of them
  - The most general alternative is usually the right answer

Bucks, 1997
Essay Questions

- **Goal:** to demonstrate how well you can explain and support an idea, not just what you know
- Read over the essay question before you start to write
- Underline key words: define, compare, explain, contrast

- Think before you write! A good response:
  - Starts with a direct response to the question
  - Mentions the topics or areas described in the question
  - Provides specifics as well as general information
  - Uses technical vocabulary of the course
Essay

• The structure:
  • Map out your main points
  • Determine the order in which you want to write your points
  • Determine the support you want to add
  • Write

• Write legibly
• Proofread your answer
True/False Questions

- For a question to be true, **every** detail must be true
- Look for a factor that will make the statement false
- Look for extreme modifiers that tend to make the question false: *always, all, never, only*
- Look for qualifying words that tend to make the question true: *seldom, often, many*
- Questions that state a reason tend to be false
- When you don’t know the answer, mark it true
- Don’t second guess yourself when a sequence of questions is all true or all false

ASHA, 205
BYU, 2014
Matching Questions

- Examine both lists to determine the types of items and their relationships
- Use one list as a starting point and go through the second list to find a match
- Move through the entire list before selecting a match, because a more correct answer may follow
- Cross off items on the second list when you are certain that you have a match
- Do not guess until all absolute matches have been made.
Fill-in-the-Blank/ Sentence Completion

- Concentrate on the number of blanks in the sentence and the length of space
- Provide a descriptive answer when you can’t think of the exact words or words.
- If you don’t know the answer right away, generate a few possibilities

BYU, 2014
Problem Solving

- **Ask yourself:**
  - What am I being asked to find?
  - What do I need to know in order to find the answer?
  - What information has been provided that will help me find the answer?
  - How can I break the problem down into parts?
  - What steps should I follow to solve the problem?
  - Does the answer make sense?
  - Does the answer cover the whole problem?
Time Management

- Get to the test on time – arrive early if possible to get organized
- Be sure to plan your time – look over the test for length, complexity and type of questions
- Know which sections of the test are worth more/weighted higher – make sure to get those done first
- Have a clock/watch handy so you can check your progress
- Don’t spend too much time on any one section
- Plan time for review
- Take control of the test – don’t let it take control

ASHA, 2015
Reviewing

- Go with your instinct if unsure
- Proofread essays for grammar and spelling
- Make sure you answered all the questions – if pen and paper, check the back side of the paper
- Make a mark next to the question you are unsure about to alert yourself later
- Go back and answer all ‘marked’ questions
Evaluating your Performance
After the Test …

- If the professor reviews the test, go to the review!
- See if your plan worked
  - Determine strengths and weakness
  - Determine learning style
  - Look at each section and learn your patterns – what type of questions do I do well on, not so well on?
- Learn from your mistakes and successes
- Talk to the teacher and get feedback
What Type of Learner am I?

- There are three primary types of learners:
  - Visual
  - Auditory
  - Kinesthetic
Visual Learners

- take numerous detailed notes
- tend to sit in the front
- often close their eyes to visualize or remember something
- find something to watch if they are bored
- like to see what they are learning
- benefit from illustrations and presentations that use color
- are attracted to written or spoken language rich in imagery
- prefer stimuli to be isolated from auditory and kinesthetic distraction
- find passive surroundings ideal

65% of people are VISUAL LEARNERS
Auditory Learners

- sit where they can hear but needn't pay attention to what is happening in front
- hum or talk to themselves or others when bored
- acquire knowledge by reading aloud
- remember by verbalizing lessons to themselves (if they don't they have difficulty reading maps or diagrams or handling conceptual assignments like mathematics).
Kinesthetic Learners

- need to be active and take frequent breaks
- speak with their hands and with gestures
- remember what was done, but have difficulty recalling what was said or seen
- find reasons to tinker or move when bored
- rely on what they can directly experience or perform
- activities such as cooking, construction, engineering and art help them perceive and learn
- enjoy field trips and tasks that involve manipulating materials
- sit near the door or someplace else where they can easily get up and move around
- are uncomfortable in classrooms where they lack opportunities for hands-on experience
Services to Assist

- Student resource center
  - accommodations
- Tutor
- Study group
- Professor
- Laboratory sessions
- Academic advisor/counselor
- Online – Ted Talks, Kahn Academy
Accommodations

- Extended testing time
- Rest breaks
- Separate testing room
- Writer/recorder
- Test reader
- Braille test
- Audio test
- Large print test book

- Sign language interpreter
- Ergonomic keyboard
- Keyboard with touchpad
- Screen magnification
- Selectable background and foreground colors
- Trackball
IF MATH WOULD GROW UP AND SOLVE ITS OWN PROBLEMS

THAT'D BE GREAT
References

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