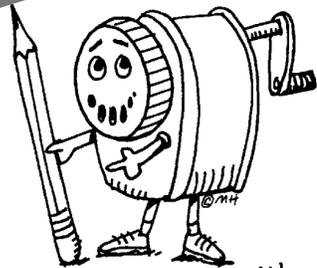


Prepare 2  
Lead &  
Succeed

# Test Taking Skills



Sharpen Your Skills

Have you ever studied for a test and thought you knew the information—but then when you actually took the test, didn't do as well as you'd hoped? Maybe you were nervous or had difficulty concentrating. Perhaps you didn't finish on time or made mistakes because you missed important instructions.

Even students who do well in class and homework assignments can still struggle when it comes to test time. But guess what? **You can become more confident and successful during tests with these simple tips and strategies.**

## **PREPARE Before the Test**

- Actively participate in class and complete homework assignments
- **Know what will be on the test** (as much as possible). Use study guides and review sessions that your teachers provide. In the case of college-admission tests (like ACT and SAT), you can use old exams as study guides.
- Start to **review early** for tests—don't wait until the night before to try to cram!
- **Take care of your body** for better test performance. This means a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast.
- **Gather all the materials you'll need** (like a calculator, pencils & pens, dictionaries, etc.)
- **Get to class early** so that you have time to settle in and get ready physically and mentally.



## **Manage Test Jitters (Stress)**

We all face jitters in situations where we're worried about doing well and our bodies show our stress in a variety of ways—stomachaches, sweating, or having a fast heartbeat are some examples. Here are a few ideas to help you calm down, focus, and concentrate



- **Think positive.** Push negative thoughts out of your head and replace them with positive thoughts that will boost your confidence, like "I've studied for this test. I'm going to do the best I can. When I relax, my memory will come. I am ready!"
- **Breathe.** Breathe in slowly. Breathe out slowly. Concentrate on your breath moving in and out of your body. Count in...1..2..3..4. Count out...1..2..3..4
- **Block out distractions.** Don't worry about when other people finish their tests. Avoid looking at other students. By keeping your eyes in front of you (or occasionally on the clock), you'll be able to focus better.
- **Imagine a calm place.** If you're having difficulty concentrating, take a

brief break. Close your eyes and visualize a place that makes you feel calm and happy. A sandy beach, your bedroom, a mountain hike.

## **During the Test**

**Follow directions** — Be sure to listen for any instructions or directions from the teacher. Before beginning the test, read over the instructions slowly and carefully. Is there anything in the directions that you do not understand? If yes, be sure to ask the teacher to explain.

**Write down important information** — like formulas, equations, facts, or other material you know and might forget.

**Do the easiest questions first** — Skip questions you don't know and come back to them later. Since most tests are timed, spending too much time on a difficult question might mean you run out of time, leaving easy questions blank.

**Use the entire time** — Resist the urge to turn your test in as soon as you've answered all of the questions. Being the first one to finish doesn't show how much you know. Instead, double-check your work, especially the more difficult questions.

## **Tips for Specific Test Questions**

### **Multiple Choice Questions**

- Read the question and come up with the answer in your head before looking at the possible answers.
- Read all of the choices before choosing your answer. Cross out answers you know are not right.
- Avoid statements with the words *always*, *never*, *every*, *all*, or *none* in them.
- Positive statements are more likely to be correct than negative statements.

### **True/False Questions**

- Remember that for a statement to be true, every part of it has to be true.
- There are usually more true statements than false statements on a test.
- Statements with the words *always*, *never*, *every*, *all*, or *none* in them tend to be false.
- Statements with the words *sometimes*, *usually*, *often*, *most*, and *many* tend to be true.

### **Short Answer Questions**

- Short answer questions usually ask students to list, name, define, identify, or give an example. Pay attention to these key words when forming your answer.
- Write in full sentences and be thorough. If asked for a list, try to come up with at least 3 answers.
- Use flashcards to study for these types of questions. Write questions on one side and answers on the other.
- Don't leave short answer questions blank. Write down whatever you know about the topic—you might get partial credit for your answer.

### **Essay Questions**

- Write an outline of what you want to cover before you begin writing.
- Organized essays with introductions and conclusions receive higher points.
- Focus on one idea per paragraph.
- Be as neat as possible when writing your essay.

