Test Taking Preparation & Skills
(Adapted from Test Anxiety, from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champion; Test Preparation Tips, from TestTakingTips.com)

Preparation:

- Stay up-to-date on assignments
  - Learn the material and review throughout the semester
  - This prevents you from having to “relearn” or “cram” the information
- Read and study information in several short sessions (45 minutes to an hour) over a longer period of time (1-2 weeks) instead of one long session
  - You will retain information better this way and be less fatigued
- Always attend the class before the test (and stay the whole time)! The professor may review specific questions that will be on the test
- As you review, predict questions from the headings in your notes and attempt to answer
- Analyze how you did on past tests to determine how you can improve
  - Some professors provide tests they have used in previous years and keep them in the library. ASK for them, and then STUDY them. Practice and study by taking these tests before your exam.
- Use mnemonic devices to learn and memorize lists, definitions, and other specific information
- Form study groups with other students AFTER you have studied on your own several times.
  - Ask each other questions you think might be on the test
- Maintain healthy living habits
  - Get a good night’s sleep (at least three hours) and eat something before the test
- Use flashcards!
  - It makes for an easy way to carry material with you
  - Look at them between classes, while in a waiting room at the doctor’s office, on the “Vulcan Flyer,” etc.

Right before the Test:

- Review any last minute information: mnemonic devices, flashcards, notes
- Arrive early!
  - Arriving early gives you time to review
  - You can pick the seat you want: Near/away from the air conditioning, away from students who might bother you during the exam, near/away from the door
- Drink a glass of water
- Use the restroom
  - You don’t want to have to worry about interruptions during the test
During the Test:

- Survey the entire test as soon as you get it
  - Look over the types of questions that will be on the test to get an overview of what is expected and strategize how you will take the test
- Read directions carefully! Ask the professor if you need clarification. You do not want to make mistakes because you did not thoroughly read the directions
- REMEMBER: This is not a race to see who can finish first!
  - Take your time. Read and reread every question.
  - Save time and when you are finished, review your answers
  - Review to see if you transferred your answers from the test to the scantron correctly
  - Utilize ALL of the allotted time
- Write down definitions, lists, and cross out answers you know are wrong on the test (IF YOUR PROFESSOR WILL LET YOU).
  - Circle/underline key words in the question (ex. All of the following BUT, define, compare, etc.)
- Read all answers on a multiple choice test.
  - Just because “A” is correct, doesn’t mean there is a more appropriate answer or an “All of the Above”
- Star questions you are unsure of and go back later
  - The answer might be in a later question on the test
- Work on the “easy” parts first.
  - If you are strong at answering essay questions, answer those first
- Create an outline in the margin when writing an essay.
  - Organization, clear thinking, and good writing is important
  - Write legibly! If your professor cannot read your writing, points will be deducted!
- Change answers only if you KNOW the response is incorrect
- Keep an eye on the clock. You don’t want to have unanswered questions

Strategies

- Look for the main point of the question
- Statements that have the words “always,” “never,” “none,” “except,” “most,” or “least” are probably NOT the answer
- Try to think of the correct answer BEFORE you read the choices
- Do NOT leave anything blank
- If you have to guess
  - The length of the option can be a clue. Choose the longest answer
• If two choices are similar, choose neither of those options
• If two choices are opposite, choose one of those options
• ALWAYS try to eliminate at least one of the options; you increase your odds of choosing the correct response
• The most general alternative is usually the right answer

After the Test

• When you receive your graded test, review what strategies and studying styles worked best for you!
  o Do not get down on yourself if you did not do well, learn from your mistakes!
• Ask your professor on areas you can improve upon
• Reward yourself!
  o Even if you’ve done poorly, you made it through the exam! Just better prepare the next time