

other questions.

Avoid watching for patterns. Noticing that the last four answers are "c," is not a good reason to continue with that pattern.

When answering essay questions, try to make an outline in the margin before you begin writing. Organization, clear thinking, and good writing is important, but so is neatness. Be sure to make your writing legible.

Save time at the end of the exam to review your test. Plan to finish early and have time for review. Granted, this kind of review can be difficult to do under the stress of exams, but it often keeps you from making needless errors.

- ◇ Return to questions you marked for review.
- ◇ Proofread your essays. Pay attention to grammar and spelling.
- ◇ Make sure you answer all the questions. Many students have failed to notice questions on the back side of the paper.

After the Test

Test taking is an art which needs refinement. Test taking is refined with practice and evaluation.

Post-Test Reviews

If the instructor reviews the exam in class, make sure you attend. Many students choose to skip class of the day of the review because "nothing is happening" that day. On the contrary, this is an important class to attend because it helps reinforce the information one more time in long term memory.

Even if you aren't interested in the "learning" aspect of the class, it is an opportunity to hear what the instructor was looking for. This can help you on the NEXT exam. *Consider every test a practice session - analyze your performance.*

Even if the instructor does review the exam in class, you should do the following on your own

- ◇ Go through each test thoroughly and see if your plan worked.
- ◇ Look at each section to identify your fault patterns. What types of questions do you need to work on?
- ◇ Talk to instructors about low scores, especially on essays.

Study Groups

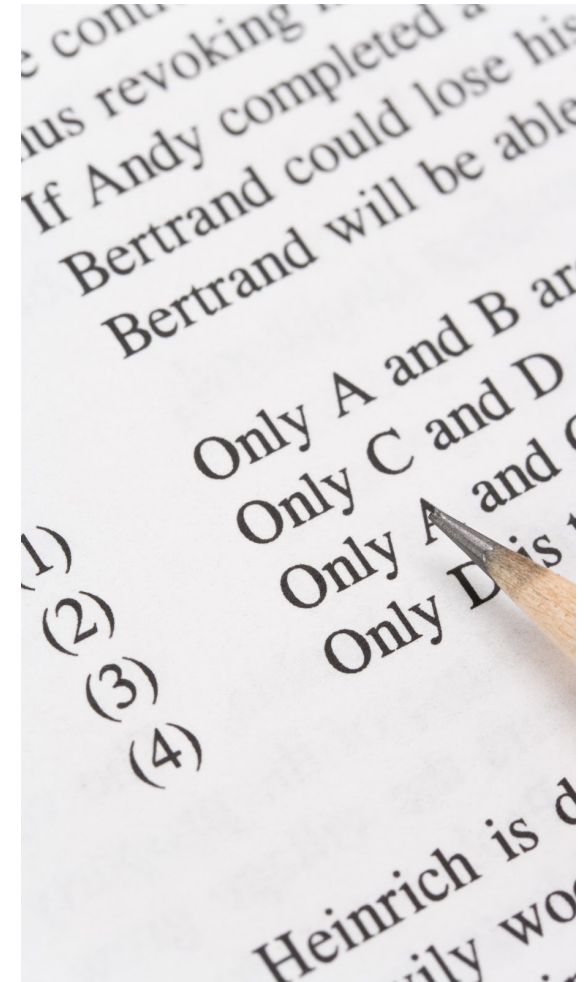
For some subjects, study groups are effective. Study groups allow students to combine resources; members share an academic goal and provide support and encouragement

To form a study group, look for students who ask and answer questions in class and who take notes. **Effective study groups have a maximum of six people.**

Set a meeting time and location. Plan a one-time-only session. If that works, plan another. After several successful sessions, schedule regular meetings.

An agenda helps avoid wasting time. List the material that will be reviewed so members can come prepared. Begin by comparing notes to make sure you all heard the same thing and recorded important information. Spend 15 minutes or so in an open-ended discussions on specific topics. Test each other by asking questions or take turns explaining concepts. Briefly brainstorm possible test questions.

Adapted from: P. T. (n.d.). Test Taking Strategies. Retrieved October 6, 2015, from http://www.d.umn.edu/kmc/student/loon/acad/strat/test_take.html



TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

Studying for and Taking College Exams

WINAHEAD



De-Stress Exams

Examinations are a fact of life in college. But, the *only* time an exam should be an ordeal is when you aren't prepared for it. A sure sign that you aren't prepared is when you have to stay up all night to "cram." Cramming won't do very much for you (*except make you so tired that when you take the exam you won't be able to think clearly enough to answer the questions you DO know*).

It is normal and healthy to feel some anxiety before an exam. Many students complain about "test anxiety." However, what students think is "too much anxiety" may really be pointing to a gap in study skills. The tips below can help you develop more effective test-taking skills.

Before the Test

Studying for exams actually begins the first day of class.

The first step in effective studying is to read the syllabus carefully to learn when quizzes and exams will be, how many there will be, and how much they are weighed into your grade.

If the course also has portfolio projects or labs, the syllabus will also tell you what these are and when these are due.

Record the due dates in a planner or on your smartphone calendar or in a to-do list app.

Review Daily, Weekly & Before Each Exam or Quiz

Conduct short reviews of lecture notes before and after class. To form this study habit, begin reviewing after your first day of class.

Plan reviews as part of your regularly weekly study schedule; consequently, you review the entire term rather than just at exam time.

- ◇ A good rule of thumb is to schedule 1 hour of review per course. Reviews are much more than reading and rereading all assignments.

Read over your lecture notes, asking yourself questions on the material you don't know well.

Review for several short periods rather than one long period. You will find that you retain information better and get less fatigued.

Turn the main points of each topic or heading into questions. Ask yourself the questions you just created. Check to see if the answers come to you easily and correctly.

Identify material you believe will be on the exam and outline your answers to potential questions.

Flashcards Can Help — It may seem "old-



fashioned," but flashcards may be a helpful way to review in courses that have many unfamiliar terms. (*You can create flashcards by using 3"x5" index cards.*)

- ◇ Creating the cards for terms and concepts you have difficulty with and reviewing the cards in random order can help you recall these terms and concepts.

During the Test

There are also some things to keep in mind when you are **TAKING** the test.

First, READ THE DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY!! Many points have been lost because students didn't follow the directions. For example, you may find that more than one answer may be possible on multiple choice tests. Or, a key detail may require that you choose only three out of the five essay questions.

Next, look the test over to see how much time you need to allot for each section. If the test is all multiple choice questions, it is good to know that immediately.

- ◇ Rely on your first impressions. The answer which comes to mind first is often correct. Nervously reviewing questions and changing answers can do more harm than good.
- ◇ Find out if you are penalized for incorrect responses. (*This is probably covered in the directions.*) If not, make educated guesses. If there is a penalty, avoid guessing.
- ◇ Work on the "easiest" parts first. If, for example, your strength is essay questions, answer those first to get the maximum points. *Pace yourself* to allow time for the more difficult parts.

Maintain a positive attitude. Don't let more difficult questions raise your anxiety and steal your valuable time. Move on and find success with