

Strategies for Effective Test Taking

Guiding Questions, A Map of this Workshop:

- What can I do the **Day of the Test** and the **Night Before the Test**?
- What are some solid test-taking strategies?
- What's the bigger picture: What can I be doing all semester?
- (Time Remaining): Strategies for overcoming test taking anxiety

What do you do now before a big test? (Days before? Night before? Morning of?)
What didn't seem to super help? Any best tricks & tips or advice you'd offer?

Decide what you want to write in the chat – a note about what you've tried the day before or morning of, something that didn't work, any tips?

Days Before	Night Before	Day of	Didn't Work	Best Advice

Test Prep Checklist: Day of the Test

The Night Before

- Get a good night's rest

The Morning Of

- Eat a nourishing meal or snack before the test.
- Avoid distractions throughout the day – anything that might start taking up brain space (ex: looking at the news / social media).
- Gather the materials needed (scantrons, pencils, pens, eraser, calculator, etc.) ahead of time.

Minutes Before

- Arrive at the exam room a little early to have time to get settled and relax.
- Avoid distractions like getting into last-minute conversations with others about specific topics in the course.
- If you need to, write down your worries on a piece of paper before the exam.

- Listen carefully to the oral instructions and read all of the written instructions before beginning. If anything seems unclear, ask for clarification.

The Test

- Look over the entire exam – with an eye toward:
 - How long it is
 - What’s worth the most amount of points
 - What looks easiest / most familiar
- Answer the questions you know well and then go back to work on the others.
- Budget time. Allot more time for questions worth more points. Give yourself 5 minutes at the end for review.
- Attempt to answer all of the questions even if not absolutely certain of the answers. Sometimes partial credit is awarded for grasping the concept.
- Check all answers for errors before turning in the exam.
- If a test seems unclear – for example, if a question can be taken to mean two different things – ask for clarification

-- adapted from K. Roth, Tomás Rivera Center, University of Texas at San Antonio

“Your brain doesn’t work as well if you are fatigued or stressed. Some stress may be unavoidable—illness and flat tires are part of life—but control as much of your life as you can on test days. You will be much more likely to recall what you’ve learned if you are rested and ready. “

Along the same line of thinking, plan out what you are going to eat and drink before the test. Muscle cells need protein, but your brain cells run on sugar. If your blood sugar is low while you are testing, your brain will not function up to its capacity. You want full capacity! Plan to eat before you start, and if a test is going to be particularly long, you might keep some candy with you to snack on while you work.

“Contrary to many students’ beliefs, an extra shot of caffeine will not improve your test-taking ability very much. Caffeine may help you feel more alert, but it doesn’t support the brain functions as blood sugar does, and it will never take the place of adequate preparation. If you don’t regularly drink coffee or cola, don’t load up right before a test. **If caffeine could help us score better on tests, we’d all be scholars.** “

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Taking apart a question

One noticeable difference between the conclusions reached in the two passages is that, unlike the author of Passage 1, the author of Passage 2

Dividing an answer into smaller parts

One noticeable difference between the conclusions reached in the two passages is that, unlike the author of Passage 1, the author of Passage 2

- A) recommends lighter sentences for violent criminals
- B) argues that increasing educational opportunities can help reduce crime
- C) blames politicians instead of pundits for the increase in criminal behavior
- D) believes that individuals must be held accountable for their actions

Taking apart a question & Dividing an answer into smaller parts

A 16-year old patient with cystic fibrosis is admitted with increased shortness of breath and possible pneumonia. Which nursing activity is most important to include in the patient's care?

- A) Perform postural drainage and chest physiotherapy every 4 hours.
- B) Allow the patient to decide whether she needs aerosolized medication
- C) Place the patient in a private room to decrease the risk of further infection.
- D) Plan activities to allow at least 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep.

Imagine what each answer would like if it were true

A 16-year old patient with cystic fibrosis is admitted with increased shortness of breath and possible pneumonia. Which nursing activity is most important to include in the patient's care?

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Turn multiple choice question into 4 true/false questions

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Decoding Unfamiliar Words

1. Look for any smaller words that that you know inside the unfamiliar word

For example: "Equinophobia"

2. See if the question makes sense if you ignore the underlined word

3. If you can, eliminate answers, see if you can find the best alternative without knowing what the word means:

"Equine" + "Phobia"

Horse + Fear

a fear of horses

You are treating a patient with Kupe's disease. When comparing cotylenol to bitylenol, which of the following interventions would be more appropriate for this patient?

- A) Cotylenol is more appropriate
 - B) Bitylenol is more appropriate
 - C) Bitylenol is not as appropriate
 - D) Both a and b
-
- The solution can't be (d) because we're asked which would be more appropriate
 - The solution very likely isn't (a) or (c) because they say the same thing
 - That leaves (b), our best alternative, even though we're not familiar with the words

Recognizing Absolute Determiners

Absolute Determiners	Qualifiers
All, Always, Every, Must, Never, None, Only	Best, Most, Often, Rarely, Primary, Some, Sometimes, Usually
These <i>usually</i> indicate a false choice unless: You recall your professor or something in the course materials emphasizing this as an <i>absolute</i> statement	These <i>often</i> indicate a good answer choice – because they acknowledge complexity & exceptions to the rule
Pay attention to negative determiners (none, never) because these involve a <i>reversal</i> of our usual thought patterns	Again, pay close attention if it's a negative qualifier (rarely, least likely) as these require a reversal of usual thought patterns

According to the latest medical finds:

- A) All people suffer from SPAK
- B) No people suffer from SPACK
- C) SPAK never occurs in young people
- D) SPACK may be found more in older people

A Quick Preview: Questions for the GRE, Nursing Exam, and LSAT

GRE

If the statements in this passage are true, then which of the following is most likely true based on the information in the passage?

- A) The number of consumers who have installed solar panels for the first time on their property has gone down steadily
- B) The total amount of energy produced in Danrovia has increased annually
- C) The amount of non-renewable energy in Danrovia has decreased annually
- D) Consumers typically install solar panels after they take steps to introduce methods of creating renewable energy
- E) The amount of energy produced from renewable sources in Danrovia increased more relative to the amount of energy produced from unrenewable sources in Danrovia

Nursing Exam

A patient with a pulmonary embolism is receiving anticoagulation with IV heparin. What instructions would you give the nursing assistant who will help the patient with activities in daily living? Select all that apply

- A) Use a lift sheet when moving and positioning the patient in bed
- B) Use an electric razor when shaving the patient each day
- C) Use a soft-bristled toothbrush or tooth sponge for oral care
- D) Be sure the patient's footwear has a firm sole when the patient ambulates

LSAT

The supernova event of 1987 is interesting in that there is still no evidence of the neutron star that current theory says should have remained after a supernova of that size. This is in spite of the fact that many of the most sensitive instruments ever developed have search for the tell-tale pulse of radiation that neutron stars emit. Thus, current theory is wrong that supernovas of a certain size always produce neutron stars. Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the argument?

- A) Most supernova remanants that astronomers have detected have a neutron star nearby
- B) Sensitive astronomical instruments have detected neutron stars much farther away than the location of the 1987 supernova
- C) The supernova of 1987 was the first that scientists were able to observe in progress
- D) Several important features of the 1987 supernova are correctly predicted by current theory
- E) Some neutron stars are known to have come into existence by a cause other than a supernova explosion

A Quick Note on Essay Questions

If you want to get better with essay questions:

- Set up an appointment with an academic coach as far in advance as possible. We can help you prepare and practice this type of writing.
- If you want to work on your own: practice writing as many outlines for the essay questions as you can, focus on coming up with evidence/examples. Or, better yet, practice writing some essays.

4 Quick Tips

1. Start with the directions – make a map of what you have to do
 - *How many* essays do you have to answer? All of them? Two?
 - Make a quick plan on how you want to pace yourself – how much time per essay

- Give yourself time to review your essay for spelling and grammar after you are done
2. Break down the question
 3. Sketch an outline
 4. Try using this paragraph model:
 - Topic Sentence/Thesis Statement
 - Evidence
 - Reasoning – a sentence or two to explicitly state how you think the evidence proves the topic sentence / main point

For example:

Prompt: Describe the ways in which play promotes children’s development

“Play performs a crucial role in both the cognitive development and social development of a child.”

“For example *So And So* argues _____. In addition *This Other Person* has argued that play does this thing and this other thing and this other thing. Etcetera etcetera, more evidence, as much as I possibly can remember.”

“All of this evidence highlights that for children play is actually fulfilling a variety of developmental growth, specifically ____, ____, and _____.”

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16 Week 2	17	18 <u>Class</u>	19	20 <u>Class</u>	21	22
23 Week 3	24	25 <u>Class</u>	26	27 <u>Class</u>	28	29
30 Week 4	31	February 1 <u>Class</u>	2	3 <u>Class</u>	4	5
6 Week 5	7	8 <u>Class</u>	9	10 <u>Class</u>	11	12
13 Week 6	14	15 <u>Class</u>	16	17 <u>Class</u>	18	19
20 Week 7	21	22 Day 1 Review	23 Day 2 Review	24 Day 3 Review	25 Day 4 Review	26 Day 5 Review
Week 8	MIDTERMS					

Study Week 1

Study Week 2
Review Week 1-2

Study Week 3
Review Week 1-3

Study Week 4
Review Week 1-4

Study Week 5
Review Week 1-5

Study Week 6
Review Week 1-6

Day 1 Review — Weeks 1-2
Day 2 Review — Weeks 1-4
Day 3 Review — Weeks 1-6
Day 4 Review — Weeks 1-8
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Setting up Your Own Study Guide

Something I Might Be Tested On	Sample Questions
(Look at headings in textbooks, class notes, summaries, quizzes, additional study materials)	(Include Question from any Study Guides from Instructor)

QUESTIONS FOR THE REVISED BLOOM'S TAXONOMY
 (from Quick Flip Questions for the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy
 EDUPRESS EP 729 – www.edupressinc.com)

LEVEL 1 - REMEMBERING		LEVEL 2 - UNDERSTANDING		LEVEL 3 - APPLYING	
Exhibit memory of previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers		Demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas.		Solve problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way	
Key Words	Questions	Key Words	Questions	Key Words	Questions
choose define find how label list match name omit recall relate select show spell tell what when where which who why	What is ...? Where is ...? How did ___ happen? Why did ...? When did ...? How would you show ...? Who were the main ...? Which one ...? How is ...? When did ___ happen? How would you explain ...? How would you describe ...? Can you recall ...? Can you select ...? Can you list the three ...? Who was ...?	classify compare contrast demonstrate explain extend illustrate infer interpret outline relate rephrase show summarize translate	How would you classify the type of ...? How would you compare ...? contrast ...? Will you state or interpret in your own words ...? How would you rephrase the meaning ...? What facts or ideas show ...? What is the main idea of ...? Which statements support ...? Can you explain what is happening ...? what is meant ...? What can you say about ...? Which is the best answer ...? How would you summarize ...?	apply build choose construct develop experiment with identify interview make use of model organize plan select solve utilize	How would you use ...? What examples can you find to ...? How would you solve ___ using what you've learned ...? How would you organize ___ to show ...? How would you show your understanding of ...? What approach would you use to ...? How would you apply what you learned to develop ...? What other way would you plan to ...? What would result if ...? Can you make use of the facts to ...? What elements would you choose to change ...? What facts would you select to show ...? What questions would you ask in an interview with ...?

LEVEL 4 - ANALYZING		LEVEL 5 - EVALUATING		LEVEL 6 - CREATING	
Examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations.		Present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas, or quality of work based on a set of criteria.		Compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.	
Key Words	Questions	Key Words	Questions	Key Words	Questions
analyze assume categorize classify compare conclusion contrast discover dissect distinguish divide examine function inference inspect list motive relationships simplify survey take part in test for theme	What are the parts or features of ...? How is ___ related to ...? Why do you think ...? What is the theme ...? What motive is there ...? Can you list the parts ...? What inference can you make ...? What conclusions can you draw ...? How would you classify...? How would you categorize...? Can you identify the different parts ...? What evidence can you find ...? What is the relationship between ...? Can you distinguish between ...? What is the function of ...? What ideas justify ...?	agree appraise assess award choose compare conclude criteria criticize decide deduct defend determine disprove dispute estimate evaluate explain importance influence interpret judge justify mark measure opinion perceive prioritize prove rate recommend rule on select support value	Do you agree with the actions...? with the outcome...? What is your opinion of ...? How would you prove ...? Disprove...? Can you assess the value or importance of ...? Would it be better if ...? Why did they (the character) choose ...? What would you recommend...? How would you rate the ...? What would you cite to defend the actions ...? How could you determine...? What choice would you have made ...? How would you prioritize ...? What judgment would you make about ...? Based on what you know, how would you explain ...? What information would you use to support the view...? How would you justify ...? What data was used to make the conclusion...? What was it better that ...? How would you compare the ideas ...? people ...?	adapt build change choose combine compile compose construct create delete design develop discuss elaborate estimate formulate happen imagine improve invent make up maximize minimize modify original originate plan predict propose solution solve suppose test theory	What changes would you make to solve ...? How would you improve ...? What would happen if ...? Can you elaborate on the reason ...? Can you propose an alternative...? Can you invent ...? How would you adapt ___ to create a different ...? How could you change (modify) the plot (plan) ...? What could be done to minimize (maximize) ...? What way would you design ...? What could be combined to improve (change) ...? Suppose you could ___ what would you do ...? How would you test ...? Can you formulate a theory for ...? Can you predict the outcome if ...? How would you estimate the results for ...? What facts can you compile ...? Can you construct a model that would change ...? Can you think of an original way for the ...?

Examples of ways to prepare and review

Preparation strategies	Review strategies
Develop study sheets	Recite study sheets
Develop concept maps	Replicate concept maps from memory
Make word cards	Recite word cards
Make question cards	Recite question cards
Make formula cards	Practice writing formulas
Make problem cards	Work problems
Make self-tests	Take self-tests
Do study guides	Practice study guide info out loud
Re-mark text material	Take notes on re-marked text
Make a list of 20 topics that might be on the exam	Recite the list of 20 topics
Do problems	Do "missed" problems
Make an outline	Recite notes from recall cues
Summarize material	Recite out loud
Make charts of related material	Re-create chart from memory
List steps in a process	Recite steps from memory
Predict essay questions	Answer essay questions
Answer questions at the end of the chapter	Practice reciting main points
Prepare material for study group	Explain material to group members

	Preparation Strategies	Review Strategies
Section A	1. _____ 2. _____	1. _____ 2. _____
Section B	1. _____ 2. _____	1. _____ 2. _____
Section C	1. _____ 2. _____	1. _____ 2. _____
Section D	1. _____ 2. _____	1. _____ 2. _____

Creating your 5-Day Study Plan (without a day off)

On Days 1-4 you will prepare one section of material (preparation strategies from previous page). On Days 2-5 you will review the material you prepared the day(s) before (review strategies from previous page). On Day 5 you will only review and then self-test over all material. Follow your plan, noting the rotation of the different groups of materials (A, B, C, D) and about how much time is spent on each one. An example Day 3 of a Day Study Plan is below.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Prepare Portion A—2 hrs.	Prepare Portion B—2 hrs. Review Portion A—30 min.	Prepare Portion C—1.5 hrs. Review Portion B—30 min. Review Portion A—15 min.	Prepare Portion D—1 hr. Review Portion C—30 min. Review Portion B—15 min. Review Portion A—15 min.	Review Portion D—25 Review Portion C—15 Review Portion B—10 Review Portion A—10 Self-test on all parts—1
Total: 2 hours	Total: 2.5 hours	Total: 2 hrs. 15 min.	Total: ~ 2 hours	Total: ~ 2 hours

Sample Day 3

- Prepare Ch. 3
 1. Re-mark highlighting
 2. Make study sheets
 3. Make word cards
 4. Make questions cards

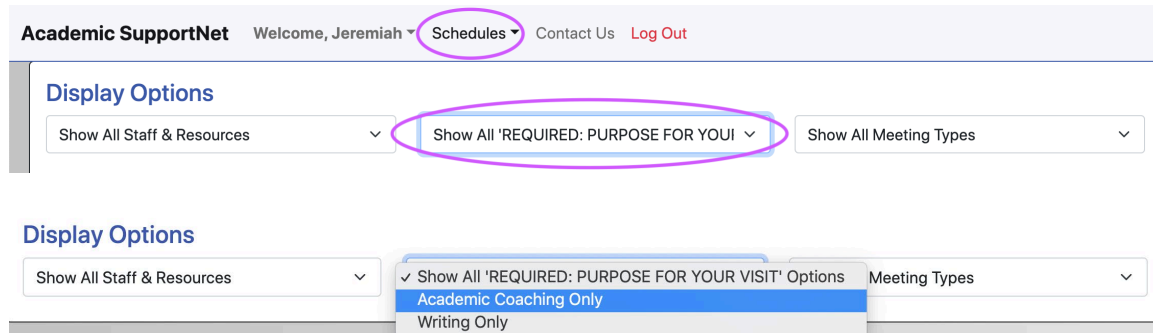
- Review Ch. 2
 1. Recite re-highlighted material, mark unknowns (recite main points)
 2. Mark and recite study sheets
 3. Recite word cards
 4. Recite questions cards

- Review Ch. 1
 1. Make a list of information still not known from text or study sheets- recite
 2. Recite cards still not known
 3. Make self-tests questions

Strategies for Dealing with Test Taking Anxiety

Resources

- AU Counseling Services
- TimelyCare app: “Talk Now” (A free telehealth counseling service provided by AU to AU students)
- Academic Coaching (Appointments available on Academic SupportNet; Choose the “Writing and Academic Coaching” Calendar **and then** choose “Academic Coaching” as the purpose of the visit.



Week(s) leading up to a test Strategies

- Try **writing down** worries to make them more manageable. See even if there are common ‘causes’ or themes in the worries. Test-taking anxiety often has a variety of causes and can at times be quite personal. For better and worse, it can take some **experimenting** to find the best way to deal with one’s anxiety.
- Try a “**Problem/Solution**” grid. If a friend came to you with one of the worries on *your* list, what advice would you give them?
- See if you can do something to try to “**prove**” a worry wrong (for example, if you’re worried about not being prepared, spend some time **studying** or ask an academic coach for some study strategies).
- **Watch self-talk**. What we say in our inner monologues can affect us. If the self-talk turns negative or self-defeating, try inserting some self-talk that is **positive and affirming** (even if it feels awkward or unnatural at first).

Day Before/Morning of Strategies

- **Write down** any last minute worries to make them more manageable.
- **Organize** materials in a way that makes you feel most prepared (it can help to arrive early to avoid last-minute rushing).
- **Watch self-talk**. Remember that while you may experience stress, this exam does not define you. It only measures how well you can do on *this* exam.
- **Try breathing exercises** to relax the body.

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Week 7						
		March 1	2	3	4	5
Week 8	MIDTERMS					

Study Week 1

Study Week 2
Review Week 1-2

Study Week 3
Review Week 1-3

Study Week 4
Review Week 1-4

Study Week 5
Review Week 1-5

Study Week 6
Review Week 1-6

Day 1 Review — Weeks 1-2
Day 2 Review — Weeks 1-4
Day 3 Review — Weeks 1-6
Day 4 Review — Weeks 1-8
Day 5 Review — Weeks 1-8

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When you're done, write something in the chat regarding:

- What seems most important in the presentation?
- Most useful?
- What do you want most to remember?
- What are you thinking about doing differently?
- What's something you wish we'd talked more about, if anything?

****Don't leave until we're at time! I want to make sure you get full credit for coming****