

# Testing Tips & Strategies

## **Part I: Preparing to study:**

- Set-up your testing and study schedule.
  1. Use a calendar, planner, agenda to write in your test dates. Use different colored markers for each course (Red-English Comp I, Blue-Calculus I).
  2. Make a timetable for your study schedule with built-in breaks. See example below:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8-9am	GYM	TRAVEL	GYM	
9-10am	STUDY (3hrs)	CLASSES	STUDY (3hrs)	STUDY (3hrs)
10-11am				
11-12				
12-1pm				LUNCH
1-2pm	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	STUDY (3.5hrs)
2-3pm	STUDY (3hrs)	CLASSES	TRAVEL	
3-4pm			CLASSES	
4-5pm				
5-6pm		TRAVEL	TRAVEL	DINNER
6-7pm	CHORES DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	WORK
7-8pm				
8-9pm	WORK	STUDY (3hrs)	STUDY (3hrs)	
9-10pm				
10-11pm				STUDY
11-12pm				

3. Don't leave it until the last minute. While some students do seem to thrive on last-minute cramming, it's widely accepted that (for most of us) this is not the best way to approach an exam. To help sort out your time management, set up a timetable for your study. Write down how many exams you have and the days on which you have to take them. Then organize your study accordingly. You may want to give some exams more study time than others, so find a balance that you feel comfortable with.
- Organize your study space.
    1. Make sure you have enough space to spread your textbooks and notes out. Do you have adequate light? Is your chair comfortable? Are your computer games out of sight?
    2. Try and get rid of all distractions, and make sure you feel as comfortable as possible and able to focus as possible. For some people, this may mean almost complete silence, for others, background music helps. Some of us need everything completely tidy and organized in order to concentrate, while others thrive in a more cluttered environment. Think about what works for you, and take the time to get it right.
  - Use flow charts and diagrams.
 

Visual aids can be really helpful when reviewing. At the start of a topic, challenge yourself to write down everything you already know about a topic - and then highlight where the gaps lie. Closer to the exam, condense your revision notes into one-page diagrams. Getting your ideas down in this brief format can then help you to quickly recall everything you need to know during the exam.
  - Practice on old exams.
 

One of the most effective ways to prepare for exams is to practice taking past versions. This helps you get used to the format of the questions, and - if you time yourself - can also be good practice for making sure you spend the right amount of time on each section.

- Explain your answers to others.  
Parents and little brothers and sisters don't have to be annoying around exam time. Use them to your advantage. Explain an answer to a question to them. That will help you to get it clear in your head, and also to highlight any areas where you need more work.
- Organize study groups with friends.  
Get together with friends for a study session. For virtual study groups you can use FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, and WebEx. You may have questions that they have the answers to and vice versa. As long as you make sure you stay focused on the topic for an agreed amount of time, this can be one of the most effective ways to challenge yourself.
- Take regular breaks.
  1. While you may think it's best to study for as many hours as possible, this can actually be counterproductive. If you were training for a marathon, you wouldn't try and run 24 hours a day. Likewise, studies have shown that for long-term retention of knowledge, taking regular breaks really helps.
  2. Everyone's different, so develop a study routine that works for you. If you study better in the morning, start early before taking a break at lunchtime. Or, if you're more productive at nighttime, take a larger break earlier on so you're ready to settle down come evening.
  3. Try not to feel guilty about being out enjoying the sunshine instead of hunched over your textbooks. Remember Vitamin D is important for a healthy brain.
- Study strategies:
  1. Make & review a study guide
  2. Read the book
  3. Make note cards
  4. Study buddy
  5. Review notes
  6. Look over power points
  7. Study Graphs
  8. Create a practice test
  9. Tutoring (E-tutoring-see Part IV)
  10. Complete the end of the chapter questions
  11. Meet with the professor during office hours
  12. Read aloud

### **Part II: Planning your exam day:**

- Make sure you get everything ready well in advance of the exam - don't leave it to the day before to suddenly realize you don't know the way, or what you're supposed to bring. Check all the rules and requirements, and plan your route and journey time. If possible, do a test run of the trip. If not, write down clear directions.
- Snack on brain food.  
You may feel like you deserve a treat, or that you don't have time to cook, but what you eat can really have an impact on energy levels and focus, so keep away from junk food. Keep your body and brain well-fueled by choosing nutritious foods that have been proven to aid concentration and memory, such as fish, nuts, seeds, yogurt and blueberries. The same applies on exam day - eat a good meal before the test, based on foods that will provide a slow release of energy throughout. Sugar may seem appealing, but your energy levels will crash an hour later

- Drink plenty of water  
Remember that being well hydrated is essential for your brain to work at its best. Make sure you keep drinking plenty of water throughout your revision, and also on the exam day.

### **Part III: Test taking strategies:**

- Multiple choice questions
  1. IF you know the answer, stick with your first choice! Statistically it has been shown that our “gut choice” is the correct one and you will find it first.
  2. However, if it’s going to be a pure guess, here are some tips to increase the accuracy of your guess:
    - a. Lines which include “all of the above.” Or “none of the above” are correct 52 percent of the time which is a higher chance of accuracy than a random guess.
    - b. Correct answers are not usually the same letter consecutively, so look at the one before or after and choose a different letter if it is a pure guess. (don’t apply this strategy if you really feel you know the answer, there are exceptions!)
    - c. Longer answers are most often the correct one as they provide more information.
    - d. Pick out key words and see if they provide clues.
    - e. If all the answers seem similar, try to find the one that has one thing different about it.
- True/False questions
  1. Don't skim over true/false questions. Carefully read every word of the question, keeping in mind that the tiniest detail can affect the answer.
  2. Pay attention to negative words and prefixes (such as un, non, etc.) that impact the meaning of a statement.
  3. Watch for double negatives, such as "not unlikely." If an event is "not unlikely," that means it is in fact a likely occurrence.
  4. Watch for qualifying modifiers (words like sometimes, usually, probably, might, etc.) tend to be used in true statements.
  5. Watch for extreme modifiers (words like always, never, absolutely, only, no one, the best, the worst, etc.) that may make a statement false that seems at first glance to be true.
  6. Remember that questions that are only partially true are in fact false.
- Short answer questions
  1. Note the power verbs, which are the action words telling you what the question requires, in the question.
  2. Break the question in parts and answer each part.
  3. The length of your answer should correspond to how many points it is worth.
- Essay questions
  1. Write as if your audience has no prior knowledge on the topic.
  2. Break the prompt into parts.
  3. Plan out each part before you begin to write.
  4. Include an introduction and conclusion.
  5. Proofread your essay. Check that you have answered all parts of the prompt.

### **Part IV Test Preparation Resources:**

- Subject specific flashcards (e.g., microeconomics) can be found at <https://www.cram.com/course-subjects>

- Flashcards and practice exams, and ones you create on your own: <https://quizlet.com/>
- Flashcards to review for exams are available at <https://www.studystack.com/>
- The University of Akron also provides year-round E-Tutoring Services for current students through [www.etutoring.org](http://www.etutoring.org)

#### References

<https://www.scholarships.com/resources/study-skills/standardized-testing/tips-for-answering-true-false-questions-on-standardized-tests/>

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