

# TAKING TESTS

## General Hints:

1. BE ON TIME.
2. Read the test directions twice, making sure you fully understand what is expected, and follow directions exactly. Take a few minutes to survey the test and find out how long it is, whether there are different types of questions, and allot your time accordingly so you don't run out of time before attempting all parts of the test.
3. Read each test question carefully and completely before marking or writing your answer.
4. Ask your instructor for help in interpreting a test question that is unclear or ambiguous to you. He or she probably will want to clear up the misunderstanding for everyone if the question really is misleading or confusing.
5. Be very careful not to give any impression of cheating by glancing at the test paper of another student.
6. Do not be disturbed about other students finishing before you do; take your time, think carefully, don't panic and you will do much better on the test.
7. Be sure to make arrangements with your instructor about making up any test that you have missed or will have to miss. Make arrangements as soon as possible. Many instructors give an automatic "F" on missed tests that are not made up.

## Hints for Objective Tests:

1. Answer all questions in order without skipping around. Identify doubtful answers by marking in the margin and recheck these if time permits, but after all questions have been answered.
2. Do not linger too long on any one question; mark your best guess and return later if time permits.
3. Be cautious about changing your answers to multiple choice and true-false questions without a good reason. Your first choice is more likely to be correct than are subsequent choices. On true-false questions, be alert for qualifying words such as "all," "none," "always," and "never," which generally make a statement false, or "most," "some," "usually," and "seldom," which tend to make a statement true. Be alert for modifying or limiting phrases inserted into the sentence. Instructors often use inserted names, dates, places, and other items to make a statement inaccurate. Watch for multiple ideas or concepts within the same statement. All parts of a statement must be true or the entire statement is false.
4. On multiple choice questions, be alert for grammatical inconsistencies between the question stem and the answer choices. A choice is almost always wrong if it and the stem do not make a grammatically correct sentence. On multiple choice questions, the

correct choice is often one of the middle choices. Perhaps a professor wants the student to read at least one or two choices before finding the correct one. The right choice is also often the longest one.

5. On matching exercises, first match those choices about which you are sure. Then it will be easier to match the rest about which you are uncertain.
6. At the beginning of the test, ask if there is any penalty for guessing. If there is none, be sure to answer all the questions. On true-false items, pick "true" or "false" and be consistent in your guessing. On multiple choice items, also be consistent, picking a middle choice, or the longest. If there is a penalty for guessing, guess only where you have somewhat of an idea of the answer.

#### Hints for Problem-Solving Tests:

1. Even if you know that your answer is wrong, show all your work because you may get part credit for using the right process. Professors often grade the question entirely on the method you use.
2. Show all the steps in your work and clearly identify or label your answer so that it can be quickly found.
3. Do not be in a hurry to turn in your paper and leave. To minimize careless errors, recheck all computations and check for misplaced decimal points. For numerical types of problems, learn to "eyeball" the answer, judge whether it is in the right ball park (i.e., 10 or 1000).

#### Hints for Essay Tests or Themes Written in Class:

1. Read all the questions through first so that your answers will not overlap each other and so that you can judge a proper rate at which to work. Keep track of time so that you do not get carried away answering one question. Give the major points and leave space for later elaboration if time permits. Start each new question or section of your theme on a new page so you can have space to add something later.
2. Answer the easiest questions first and concentrate on answering one question at a time. When you are given a choice of questions or topics, choose with the utmost care. This is your first and most important step. Do not decide hastily, but do not spend excessive time trying to choose. You might want to jot down the first few ideas that come to your mind when you first read a question. Then you will have something to build on when you begin writing.
3. Allow yourself a few minutes to think through and outline before you begin writing. Preparing a brief outline assures good organization and prevents unintentional omissions. Decide what kind of answer the question requires before you begin writing. A different style of answer is required for such action verbs as "illustrate," "list," "define," and "compare."
4. DO NOT PAD - strength is more important than length in determining the grade.

5. If you know your theme topic or essay questions beforehand, go into class mentally prepared with a reservoir of facts and information.
6. Include as many specific facts as you can to support your answer; these impress your instructor by giving evidence that you know what you are talking about.
7. Use simple words that you understand and can spell; avoid slang except for emphasis. If you are a poor speller, ask the instructor before the test if you can bring a dictionary with you. If so, use it. Unless you are good at punctuation, avoid long sentences requiring complex internal punctuation. Write legibly and make all corrections neatly. Neatness indicates pride in work and makes a good impression before your instructor starts reading. Studies have shown that instructors, no matter how fair they try to be, give a lower grade to papers which are messy and hard to read. Be smart, print if your writing looks like chicken scratches!
8. Strive toward making your first draft your final one; time is too limited to allow for recopying.

Allow a few minutes to reread your answers on your theme, carefully checking for grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.