

— MOVING FROM ORDINARY — TO EXTRAORDINARY

TEST-TAKING SKILLS

Three-phase testing cycle: pre-test, test, and post-test.

Before everything else, getting ready is the secret to success.

—Henry Ford (1863 – 1947), American founder of the Ford Motor Company.

TIPS FOR PRE-TEST PHASE

- Know as much as possible about the test ahead of time—talk to your teacher.
- Which chapters should you focus on?
- Ask for sample test questions or look at your previous test from this class.
- Ask questions about the format of the test.
- Look at your previous tests to see what mistakes you made. Each test can better prepare you for the next one.
- Save old tests to use as a review when studying for your final exams.
- Get enough sleep the night before the test. Scientists have recently proven that all-night cramming is counterproductive. You'll remember less, not more! A good night's sleep helps to embed material you'll need to remember the next day.
- Eat well the day of the test.
- Bring all the materials you will need such as pencils and pens and a calculator (if allowed).
- Stay relaxed, comfortable, and confident.
- Maintain a positive attitude. Remind yourself that you are well-prepared and are going to do well on the test. If you find yourself becoming anxious, breathe. Take slow, deep breaths to relax.
- Don't talk with other students about the test before you take it. What they tell you might make you nervous and cause you to focus on what you didn't study.

TIPS FOR TEST PHASE

- Write your name on the test. You want credit for your work.
- Read the directions carefully. This sounds like a "no-brainer," but you'd be surprised how easy it is to make a careless mistake. Read the directions to avoid errors.
- If there is time, quickly look through the test to determine the format and see what types of questions are included.
- Strategize when taking tests, as follows:
 - Start with easy questions to build your confidence, score points, and mentally orient yourself to vocabulary, concepts, and the knowledge needed to do well (it may help you make associations with more difficult questions).
 - After finishing the easy questions, do the types of questions whose format you find the most comfortable completing. For example, if you feel you're best at true-false questions as opposed to multiple choice or short answer, do the true-false questions next.
 - Complete difficult questions or questions with the most point value.
 - Go for partial credit when you know you can't answer the entire question—show that you have an idea of what you're doing.
 - Try not to ever leave a question blank.
 - When stuck on a question that requires a written response, show any relevant knowledge that you can and then move on. That may get you more points than a blank space would.
 - Time permitting, review your test to make sure you answered all the questions and did not mismark the answer sheet or make simple mistakes.

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TIPS FOR TEST PHASE - CONTINUED

- Proofread your answers for spelling, grammar, punctuation, decimal points, etc.
- Change answers to questions where you misread any questions or found information in the test indicating that your first choice was incorrect.

TIPS FOR POST-TEST PHASE

- If you receive your test back to keep, rework missed problems—if necessary ask your teacher for assistance. Look up the correct answers for missed questions. This is especially important for tests in which you will see the same material on another test or your final exam.
- If you do not receive your test back, ask your teacher questions about problems you missed.
- Identify the reason you missed a question, and keep these reasons in mind for the next test.
- Did you read it incorrectly?
- Did you forget to study for it?
- Did you run out of time?
- Check the level of detail and skill of the test.
- Did the questions require precise details and facts or did they require knowledge of the main ideas and principles?
- Did the questions come straight from the text or did your teacher expect you to make complex analyses?