

# HINTS FOR BETTER TEST-TAKING



Workshop sponsored by:

**The Dr. Mack Gipson, Jr.,  
Tutorial and Enrichment Center**

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## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

### **Be prepared**

1. Study effectively, efficiently, and frequently. Do not just wait until the night before the test!
2. Be rested and relaxed.
3. Arrive in class early:
  - a. Get set up for the test.
  - b. Use some relaxation techniques.
  - c. Get a positive mind-set.

### **Plan ahead**

1. Jot down terms, facts, memory aids, formulas, equations, and other material that you know you will need and might forget. Use the margins or the back of the test.
2. Look over the entire test before you start answering questions.
3. Mark the questions that you think will be easy for you to answer.
4. Budget your time and pace yourself so you do not run out of time.

### **Answer questions wisely**

1. Answer the questions in this order:
  - a. Answer the easiest, shortest questions first.
  - b. Next, answer multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank questions.
  - c. Then, do the short-answer questions.
  - d. Finally, do the essay questions.
2. Pay attention to directions.
2. Use tricks to help you remember information.

### **Gain points**

1. Leave space between your answers so that you can add information if you think of it later.
2. Write neatly so your instructor can read your answers.
3. Go with your first instinct unless you realize that you had misread the question when you first answered it.
4. Read all of the questions carefully. Underline or circle key words and phrases.
5. Answer all questions carefully.
6. Answer questions even if you do not think you know the entire answer. Getting even partial credit is better than getting no credit for an answer.

### **Give yourself every chance for success**

1. Use the full time allowed for the test. Review your work. Go back and answer any questions you skipped.
2. Do not let anxiety interfere with your work. Stay relaxed and alert. Do the best you can do.

## PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION

PATTERN	LIST	CHRONOLOGY	CAUSE/ EFFECT	COMPARE/ CONTRAST
SIGNAL WORDS	also in addition furthermore and  “There are 3 things to remember . . .”	first, second, third, ... next then finally at last meanwhile afterwards now soon later in the first place	because thus as a result consequently accordingly and so causes leads to results from results in	however nevertheless on the contrary still yet but contrast like in the same way on the other hand although similarities differences
TAKING NOTES	Write notes in the form of a list (from smallest to largest, from most important to least important, etc.).	List the information in the order in which things happened.	List the reasons why something happened or list the causes that produced a specific effect.	<u>Compare</u> 2 or more things to show how they are alike.  <u>Contrast</u> 2 or more things to show how they are different.



## CLUES FOR CONQUERING TESTS

1. Read the directions carefully.
2. Read the entire question carefully.
3. Pay attention to **negatives**:

<u>Words:</u> no      none not     never	<u>Prefixes:</u> <b>il-</b> (illogical) <b>un-</b> (uninterested) <b>im-</b> (impatient)	<u>Double Negatives:</u> He did not keep no records. <i>The double negatives cancel each other out:</i> He did <del>not</del> keep <del>no</del> records.
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4. Pay attention to **qualifiers**:

all – most – some – none (no) – only	more – equal – less
always – usually – sometimes – never	good – bad      better – worse      best – worst
great – much – little – no	is – is not

5. Pay attention to grammatical clues.
6. Pay attention to context clues.
7. Answer all questions.

**Read very carefully. Every word is important!!**

## LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC QUESTION TYPES

Type of Question	Strategies
True-False	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The statement must be 100% true to be considered true.</li> <li>2. If you are forced to guess, remember that instructors usually try to leave you with correct information in your mind, so there may be more true statements than false ones on a test.</li> <li>3. Be careful with longer statements: Each word added to a true-false statement increases the chances that it is false.</li> </ol>
Multiple Choice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If you can find at least two correct answers, choose “all of the above.”</li> <li>2. If you are having trouble answering a multiple choice question, turn it into a series of true-false questions by using each answer in turn to complete the question. The answer which makes the question true is usually the correct answer.</li> <li>3. Eliminate the answers that are obviously not correct and then concentrate on the remaining ones that might be correct.</li> <li>4. If the answers are all numbers and you have absolutely no idea of which one is correct, try eliminating the highest and lowest numbers before selecting your answer from the remaining numbers.</li> </ol>
Matching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Answer matching questions in an organized manner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select one item from the column with the <u>longer</u> entries (such as the list of definitions).</li> <li>• Read through the column with the <u>shorter</u> entries (such as the list of vocabulary words) until you find the correct match. If you do not find the answer the first time you read through this column, it will be easier to keep re-reading these items than to keep re-reading the longer items in the other column.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Mark off the items as you use them so you do not have to keep reading them.</li> </ol>
Sentence Completion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do not pay attention to the length of the blank line. Concentrate on the words that are present rather than on the words that are missing.</li> <li>2. If the sentence has two widely separated blank lines, treat the question as if each blank line occurred in a separate sentence.</li> <li>3. Make sure each filled-in word makes sense in its own part of the statement.</li> </ol>
Essays	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read all of the essay questions before you start writing.</li> <li>2. If you have a choice of essays, pick the one(s) that you can do the best job on.</li> <li>3. Make sure you understand the question that is being asked and make sure you answer that question.</li> <li>4. Outline your ideas before you start writing the essay.</li> <li>5. Write neatly. Skip lines so you can add information if you think of it later.</li> <li>6. Turn the question into the first sentence of your answer.</li> </ol>

### WORKSHEET FOR EXAMINING RETURNED TESTS\*

<b>TEST ITEM MISSED</b>	<b>INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION</b>						<b>TEST ANXIETY</b>				<b>LACK OF TEST WISDOM</b>				<b>TEST SKILLS</b>				
	I did not read the text thoroughly.																		
	The information was not in my notes.																		
	I studied the information but could not remember it.																		
	I knew general information but not word-for-word information.																		
	I knew the information but could not apply it.																		
	I studied the wrong information.																		
	I experienced mental block.																		
	I spent too much time daydreaming.																		
	I was so tired I could not concentrate.																		
	I was so hungry I could not concentrate.																		
	I panicked.																		
	I carelessly marked a wrong choice.																		
	I did not eliminate grammatically incorrect choices.																		
	I did not choose the <u>best</u> choice.																		
	I did not notice limiting words (qualifiers).																		
	I did not notice a double negative.																		
	I changed a correct answer to a wrong one.																		
	I misread the directions.																		
	I misread the question.																		
	I made poor use of the time available.																		
	I wrote a poorly organized response.																		
	I wrote an incomplete response.																		
<b># OF ITEMS MISSED</b>																			

\* Based on worksheet in "Activities/Handouts" manual from Student Support Services, Patrick Henry Community College, Martinsville, VA