

General Test-Taking Strategies

1. Preview the Exam

When you receive your exam:

- Quickly scan the entire paper.
- Identify:
 - Number of questions
 - Types of questions (MCQ, essay, short answer, etc.)
 - Point distribution across sections
- Compare with any exam guidelines given by your instructor.

Purpose: Helps you plan your time and strategy effectively.

2. Follow Directions Carefully

- Always read written and oral instructions carefully.
- Do NOT assume all exams follow the same rules.
- Instructions may include:
 - Number of questions to answer
 - Type of expected answers
 - Special rules (e.g., multiple correct answers)

Tip:

- Underline key words in instructions.
- Place a checkmark after reading directions to avoid confusion later.

3. Budget Your Time

Why it matters:

Poor time management may lead to unanswered questions and lost marks.

a. Consider the point values

Time should be allocated based on point value.

Percentage of total points = Percentage of total time
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Example:

- 20% of marks → 20% of time

Practical Example 1:

- 4 short-answer questions (5 points each = 20 points)
- 40 MCQs (2 points each = 80 points)
- Total time: 50 minutes

Time allocation:

- Short answers → 10 minutes (20%)
- MCQs → 40 minutes (80%)

b. Pace Yourself During the Exam

- Divide total time across sections or pages.
- Avoid spending too much time on one question early in the exam.

☞ Example:

- 50 minutes, 5 pages → ~8 minutes per page

4. Reduce Test Anxiety

Types of test anxiety:

- **Facilitating anxiety** → motivates performance
- **Debilitating anxiety** → harms performance

Strategies to reduce anxiety:

- ✓ **Prepare well**
 - Use structured study plans (e.g., 5-day study plan).
- ✓ **Monitor learning**
 - Self-test while studying.
 - Identify weak areas and revise them.
- ✓ **Use relaxation techniques**
 - Deep breathing
 - Muscle relaxation
- ✓ **Use positive self-talk**
 - Replace negative thoughts with positive statements.
- ✓ **Start with easy questions**
 - Build confidence early in the exam.
- ✓ **Identify triggers**
 - Avoid starting with sections that increase stress

5. Work Logically Through the Exam

- Answer easy questions first.
- Mark difficult questions and return later.
- Stay calm when encountering hard questions:
“I’ll come back to this later.”

Benefits:

- Builds confidence
- Helps memory retrieval through cues in other questions

6. Use Strategic Guessing (When Needed)

Only use this if:

- You are well prepared
- You have leftover unanswered questions

Strategies:

a. Look for patterns

- Correct answers are often balanced across options.

b. Check for balanced answer keys

- Some instructors distribute answers evenly (A, B, C, D).

☞ Important:

Do NOT rely on guessing alone. It is only a backup strategy.

7. Review Before Submitting

Always check your exam before handing it in:

- Ensure all questions are answered.
- Check for careless mistakes.
- Verify that answers are correctly marked.

8. Learn From Your Mistakes

After receiving your exam:

Reflect on:

- Did I run out of time?
- Did I make careless mistakes?
- Which sections were difficult?
- Did I over-focus on certain questions?
- Did I struggle with essays?