

Taking Objective Tests

While objective tests may not carry the same “fear factor” as essay tests, students often find it hard to prepare for and take objective tests. However, there are techniques students can use before and during objective tests that may help make test-taking a little easier.

Before the test

Answer the questions **What?** **When?** **Where?** **How?**

What to Study

1. **Review all major sources of information** from the unit: lecture notes, reading notes, handouts, assignments, textbook, course outline, and quizzes.
2. **List all major concepts.** Identify and concentrate on those which were stressed in lectures or readings.
3. **List all vocabulary** specifically associated with the topics.

When to Study

1. **Study early and often.**
2. **Spend ten to fifteen minutes immediately after each class** session organizing, highlighting, and annotating notes from that session.
3. **Spend two or three hours each week** reviewing, reciting, and refining the week’s notes. See how the lecture notes and reading notes fit together.
4. **Dedicate the evening before the test** to studying.
5. **On the day of the exam, do a final review** just prior to taking the test. That will refresh your memory, remind you of any specific details, and get your mind focused on the exam material.

All-nighter cramming sessions are generally a bad idea. Retention is better if you get at least 6 hours of sleep after learning the material.

Where to Study

Choose any place you can be comfortable and assured of no interruptions—the LRC’s quiet study area, Milner or Normal Public Library, a vacant classroom, a restaurant, your room, outside—anywhere you can spread out your materials and concentrate for an extended period of time. (However, don’t get so comfortable that you doze off!)

How to Study

1. **Get organized.** Be sure you know what you want to accomplish and that you have all necessary materials—paper, pencil, notes, books, etc.
2. **Identify specific areas** which need work and concentrate on those.
3. **Predict test questions** and answer them.
4. **Learn relationships** between concepts. Make compare/contrast charts, maps, or diagrams.
5. **Use many short (10-15 minute) sessions** instead of one 2-hour block.
6. **Don’t limit yourself to a single type of studying.** Recollection improves when you use a variety of techniques. Read and recite aloud. Write out important information, either on the computer or by hand.
7. **Know what kind of test to expect.** Find out as specifically as possible what material is covered on the exam. Instructors often give specifics to expect on exams. Study those sections.
8. **Find out what kinds of questions will be asked...** True/False, multiple choice, fill in the blank, matching.
9. **Develop your own study system.**

Index Cards

Carry the cards with you and take advantage of 10 or 15 minute breaks in your day to review. Sort through the cards and take out the ones you know so you can concentrate on the difficult concepts. Sort the cards by topic. Shuffle the deck so you can’t rely on clues from the placement of the card.

Try different card patterns to help you review.

Front — Vocabulary words

Back — Definitions

Front — Questions

Back — Answers

Front — Fact

Back — In-depth explanation

Study Sheet

Go through all the sources of information and pick out the important material. Get it down on the sheet. Chart it. Outline it. Organize it. Group it by meaningful relationships. Go over the whole study sheet and then concentrate on the difficult sections.

Study Group

If you learn better in a group, get together with other students to study. Quiz each other. Share notes. Clarify concepts. Don't limit yourself to oral questioning strategies; sometimes writing and reading are better ways to review.

Study groups are not for everyone. If you spend more time socializing than studying, individual studying is a better choice for you.

DURING THE TEST Get organized

- 1. Come to class a little early, and come prepared.**
Bring everything you'll need for the test: calculator, extra pens or pencils, paper, any permissible helps, tissue, snacks if permissible.
- 2. Listen carefully to any oral directions.**
Instructors may give additional information or make corrections at the beginning of the testing period.
- 3. Read through the entire test before starting.**
Budget your time. Decide in advance how much time you'll need to spend on each section, and stick to your plan. Be sure to allow time for review.
- 4. Don't get stuck on a single question.**
Mark it and come back.
- 5. Look for clues in the body of the test.**
Often questions include information that may be helpful on another section of the test
- 6. Look back over your completed test.**
Be sure that you answered every question and check to see that you are still satisfied with your answers. Be careful about changing answers; your first thought is often correct.
- 7. Don't be distracted by how quickly other students may finish.**
The first tests turned in don't always receive the highest grades. Work until you are satisfied that you've done your best.

Hints for Specific Types of Questions

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Read the question carefully. Watch out for words like *except*, *not*, or *but*; these words change the focus of the question.

Try to complete the stem BEFORE you read the choices. Then compare your own answer with the options presented.

Try reading the stem with each answer and treating it as a True/False question.

Be wary of choices with the words *only*, *always* or *never*.

Look for clues in other questions.

If you have no clue—guess! If there is no additional penalty for wrong answers, a guess is better than a blank.

TRUE FALSE

Read carefully. One word can make a difference. If it's partly false, it's all false.

Look for qualifiers—answers with absolute qualifiers (*all*, *always*, *never*) are often false; those with broad qualifiers (*usually*, *often*) are often true.

Don't spend too much time "reading into" a question. Take it at face value and move on.

MATCHING

Read the directions, the definitions, and the choices carefully.

Choose an answer BEFORE you look through the choice list.

Try working from the answer list and looking for definitions instead of choosing an answer to fit a definition.

If you can write on the exam, cross off answers as you use them.

Check for clues in other questions.

Look for grammar clues.