

How To

Do Better on Tests



You didn't start studying for your big test until last night. So you were up until forever cramming. You woke up late—no surprise—and almost missed the bus. By the time you walked into your class, you were so nervous you weren't sure you'd remember how to spell your own name.

You did get your name right—but you aren't sure about a lot of your answers. You spent so long on the true-false questions that you left almost no time for the essay question—and it counted for 25 percent of your grade.

Does this sound like you? You may know most of the material the teacher presents in class. But your grade might not reflect what you have learned. Look inside to learn skills that will help you do better on tests.

When you're in the testing room:

1. Skim the test quickly. You don't want to turn to the last page of the test with five minutes left in class only to discover you still have two essay questions to answer. Knowing what's ahead will help you budget your time.

2. Read the directions carefully. If the question says, "Show all your work," be sure you show your work. Underline important directions so you don't overlook them. If you're not clear about something in the directions, ask.

3. Don't be afraid to skip a question. Let's face it—sometimes you come across a question that might as well be written in Martian. Don't panic—it's just one question. Skip it and move on. Come back if you have time.

4. Look for "clue words." On a multiple choice or a true-false test, some words may indicate an answer is wrong. Words like *always*, *none*, *all* and *everybody* mean that if there are any exceptions, that answer is wrong.

5. Make sure you fill in answers to the right questions if you're using a separate answer sheet. Every so often, check that the numbers on the question and the answer space match.

6. Check your work. Often, it's a careless mistake (adding instead of multiplying, for example) that leads to an incorrect answer.

Although tests are a part of life, they aren't everything. Teachers also consider effort, attendance and class work when grading. So don't spend time worrying about that one test you didn't do well on—just be prepared for the next one. After all, whether it is a final exam or your driver's license test, strong test-taking skills will help you achieve the score you deserve.

Good luck!

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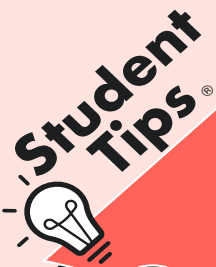
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Tests are a part of life

Tests don't just happen in school. Want to get a driver's license? You have to take a test. Want to go to college or get into the armed forces? More tests.

Many jobs, from firefighter to lawyer, also require you to pass a test before you can be hired.

Things to do before test day:

- **Spread out studying.** When you put off studying until the night before the test, you're setting yourself up for failure. (And you're also likely to go into the test feeling bleary-eyed from lack of sleep.) Review in several short study sessions. You'll feel less pressure—and you'll remember more.

- **Make a study sheet.** For most subjects, there are a few key facts you need to remember for a test—formulas in math or science, dates in history, irregular verbs in a foreign language. Write them on a single sheet of paper and look at them just before you walk into your classroom, then put the paper away. You might write some of those key facts on the test paper if permitted as soon as it's handed out.

- **Create a practice test.** As you're studying, try to think of the questions you would ask. You may figure out what's on the test!



- **Study with a buddy.** Try reviewing for the test with one or more friends. Ask each other questions and share your thoughts on what the teacher is likely to ask. One word of warning, though—you really have to *study*, not socialize.
- **Make flash cards.** Flash cards are a great tool for reviewing everything from math facts to vocabulary words. Carry them with you for quick reviews. Once you've mastered a card, take it out of the pile so you can concentrate on the items you don't know. (Save all the cards and use them for occasional review.)

- **Dress for success.** You don't need to wear your fanciest clothes. But what you wear *can* affect your performance on a test. Sometimes, testing rooms are too hot or too cold. Dressing in layers is a good idea. And be sure to wear comfortable clothes—test day is *not* the day to wear those jeans that are just a little bit too tight.

- **Eat breakfast.** Even if you usually skip breakfast, have something to eat on test day. Cereal, milk and fruit will give your body and brain energy.

- **Pack the supplies you need.** Don't wait until the morning of the test to find a Number 2 pencil or see if your laptop is charged—that's a sure way to make you stressed out and possibly even late to the test. Set out everything you'll need for the test the night before. Then go to bed and get a good night's sleep.