

Exam Taking Strategies

It can be easy to become overwhelmed when taking a test, but there are many strategies that you can utilize for your personal success.

4 Common Pitfalls of Test Taking

- 1. Pacing.** During your exam, you may find yourself rushing or second guessing your answer choices. Avoid this pitfall by working at comfortable pace for you. Pace yourself during the exam to help you keep track of time. Take note of where the clock is in the classroom and check it at regular intervals to assess where you are in the exam.
- 2. Overanalyzing.** If you overanalyze the questions, you may spend too much time on one question. This may result in your misunderstanding the question and overthinking your answer choice. Avoid this pitfall by considering only what the test question is telling you. Look for details and information in the question to help you clarify any confusion.
- 3. Second Guessing.** You have already answered an exam question, but you feel the need to change your answer. If this happens to you, try to commit to your original answer. Only consider changing your answer if you have a good reason. Avoid this pitfall by taking your time and working through your exam calmly and methodically.
- 4. Unfamiliarity.** The exam questions may not look identical to your class notes or study guides. Different exam questions require different levels of thinking. Avoid this pitfall by re-reading the question until you understand exactly what it is asking. If the exam question is unfamiliar, consider what you do know about the information. If the answer options are unfamiliar, consider what you know about each answer choice. Choose the answer that makes the most sense based off the information that you know!

Test Taking Tips:

- Write down what you know the moment you receive your exam for referral throughout the exam. Examples Include: formulas, mnemonic devices, stages in processes, etc.
- Read every question more than once and carefully. Underline key words in the questions to determine what is being asked. Examples Include: apply, define, explain, what, how, who, why.
- If your question puts emphasis on negatives (not, avoid, least, except), circle the negative word and consider how it applies to the question.
- Try to answer questions without looking at the options, then see how it matches the choices.
- If you know the answer, select it and move on. If you do not, make note of it and revisit it later.
- When selecting from a list of alternatives, consider what would make a statement true versus what would make it false. Choose the answer that best applies to the information you are given.
- At the end of your exam, review it for questions you skipped and re-read any short answer responses for spelling, grammar, and opportunities for clarification.
- Stay calm and confident. If you find yourself becoming anxious during your exam, consider breathing deeply and then go back to your exam. See the ASC "Taming the Testing Butterflies" for more information about reducing anxiety before and during your exams.

Employing Exam Taking Strategies for Your Next Exam

Answer the following questions.

What pitfalls outlined above have you experienced in the past?

What strategies will you use on your next exam?
