EXAM

TIPS

(Exam Preparation, Study Tips & Exam appearing tips for Students taking Entrance & Competitive Exams)

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INTRODUCTION

Exams may be anxiety provoking for some people. They may worry about an exam for days before it is to take place and/or during the exam, when tackling the examination they may experience negative thoughts and unpleasant physical symptoms which prevent them from performing to the best of their ability.

It is wise to remember that exams are not there as punishment. Instead, they are a good way of testing to see how much information you have learnt.

Examinations test a student's knowledge and understanding of a particular subject. They bring questions from an entire module together in a challenging environment.

Exams value your memories and your skills and ability to understand what you are studying. They make you prepare before hand and, if they are unseen, they make you cover a lot of topics as you do not know the questions. They also force you to be specific and focused, as time is limited in most exams.

Here are a few tips on as to how we can prepare and get “A”s in our exams. Remember that there are NO Short Cuts to Success” *The Tips listed down in this ebook have been gathered from lecturers and students - past and present. People learn in different ways, some of the advice is contradictory. Use whatever works for you; discard the rest."*

Here We GO –

Obstacles to Academic Success

Before proceeding any further, first of all lets see what are the main Obstacles To Academic Success. There can be many distractions ..... Some items in this list may be YOUR obstacles ! Answer "Yes" to any item which regularly interferes with your doing well in school / College. If you have too many "yes" answers, Make a note and start working on it.

1. Lack of a study schedule
2. Priorities unclear (What to study first)
3. Failure to use short blocks of time constructively
4. Failure to use long blocks of time constructively
5. When sitting down to study, usually too tired or listless to study
6. Leaving tasks unfinished; jumping from one task to another
7. Studying on bed & falling asleep
8. Daydreaming
9. Can't resume studying after study breaks
10. Spending too much time socializing, playing games or sports
11. Unable to say "no" to invitations and requests
12. Making unrealistic time estimates
13. Attempting too much at once
14. Getting behind in one course because of having to study for another
15. Getting involved in unnecessary details
16. Accomplishing very little in relation to the amount of time spent studying
17. Distracted or frustrated by cluttered desk
18. Not having or unable to locate needed materials
19. Study area faces a window, door, TV, phone or other distractions
20. Interruptions by outside interference (phone calls, visitors, noises)
21. Frequently waiting until the last minute before starting to study or begin major project i.e., Procrastination.

22. Feeling of intense panic while taking tests

Don’t you worry. The purpose of this E-book is to give you suggestions and ideas as to how to work in order to achieve success.

I am sure if you apply these suggestions, make little changes in your daily lifestyle, work on your attitude, there is nothing to stop you to ACHIEVE whatever results you AIM at.

MAKE GOOD STUDY HABITS

Effective study skills and strategies are the basis of effective learning. They give you an opportunity to approach learning tasks systematically and independently. By always using good study habits—learning to work smarter—you will work like and become a successful student.

Learn To Learn

Learning is a very personal matter. There isn't one study/learning skill or strategy that works for every person in every situation. Therefore, learning to learn strategies are about learning what you know, learning what you don't know, and learning what to do about it. Your repertoire of study/learning strategies will:

- enable you to take more responsibility for your own learning
- allow you to spend your time effectively and stay on task
- help you select the best approach(s) for each assignment or task
- provide you with the knowledge and skills needed to begin, follow through, and complete assignments/tasks
- present you with access to a variety of content and reference materials
- give you the confidence to know when and who to ask for help

1. **Know Yourself**

   Begin by honestly assessing your strengths and weaknesses in basic college skills—reading, writing, listening, and mathematics—and study/work habits such as organization, time management, concentration, listening, and note taking.

   Next, identify your learning style preferences. Many factors affect learning, but consider whether you learn most effectively by reading, by watching, by listening, or by doing? You must also become familiar with your

instructors teaching styles to help you adapt your learning style to the best advantage.

In addition, consider when (Are you a morning person or a night owl?) and where (Do you concentrate best in a bright room with noise or in a cozy, quiet corner?) you are at your best for learning.

2. **Manage Your Time and Life**

   The first step in learning to manage your time—controlling your own life—is to identify what your goals are and then to establish priorities to help you reach them.

   Analyze how you are using your time. If you aren't spending time on your priorities, you must make the necessary adjustments or you won't reach your goals. If school, learning, and good grades are a priority, then you must make and follow a schedule that gives a significant amount of time to go to class and study.

3. **Improve Your Concentration**

   As a good student, you will not necessarily study more than a poor student, but you will definitely use your study time more effectively.

   Learn to keep your attention focused on the task at hand—concentrate. When you are in class or ready to study, give it your full attention.

   And remember, how well you learn something, not how fast you learn it, is the critical factor in remembering. You must "get" something before you can "forget" it.

4. **Know What Study Means & How To Do It -** Learning takes more than just going to class and doing homework. It is really a four-part cycle:

preview >> class >> review >> study

When you establish a learning-cycle routine you will be able to learn more in less time with less stress.

5. **Develop A Thinker's Vocabulary**

English is the richest language with the largest vocabulary on earth. Each of our words is a symbol that represents an idea or object. Your ability to understand the meaning of the words others use and to select the right one(s) to communicate your ideas, information, and feelings is very important to effective learning.

To develop a thinker's vocabulary, you must become sensitive to words and develop strategies for unlocking the meanings of new words and a process for remembering the new words and their meanings.

6. **Become An Active Reader**

Did you ever fall asleep while playing Cricket or tennis or when watching your favorite television show?

Probably not. How about when you're reading?

Probably so. What makes the difference?

If you are actively involved, physically and mentally, you stay interested and committed. When you become passive, you rapidly lose interest and drift away.

To learn from study/reading material, you must be an active, thinking participant in the process, not a passive bystander. Always preview the

reading and make sure you have a specific purpose for each assignment. Read actively to fulfill your purpose and answer questions about the material. Keep involved by giving yourself frequent tests over what you've read.

7. **Make a Habit of Writing**

Writing that accurately expresses your ideas demands not only writing skill but focused attention, critical thinking and active involvement. Only if you become actively involved in the writing process will you be able to communicate your ideas clearly.

Your writing must have:

- a purpose,
- a controlling idea or thesis,
- organized development of your idea with major and minor supporting details, and
- a logical conclusion.

8. **Build Listening & Note taking Skills**

Accurately listening to a lecture and deciding what is important are two skills that must be mastered before you worry about how to write the information in your notes. Again, being an active rather than a passive participant is the key to your success.

Taking good notes demands that you :

- prepare for class,
- become an active listener,

- distinguish major from minor points,
- use a note-taking system,
- participate in class, and
- review often.

True education is not about cramming material into your brain. True education is the process of expanding your capabilities, of bringing yourself into the world.

Remember, Professors can merely set the stage for you to create learning through your own action.

Why Cramming does not work?

There is a biological reason for this. The problem is that cramming information places it into our brains in short term storage. This is where you put everyday information that is not really worth remembering. In order to learn we have to transfer information into long term memory. Once there, you can retrieve it far easier over a longer period of time. Here's an overview the differences:

Short term memory:

All information is processed in the brain and stored in short term memory. The problem is that this information sort of overloads the brain and is not kept for very long. Can you remember every single event that happened to you in a given day? Think of the literally thousands of bits of information you are exposed to every day. It's not necessary to remember it all, so the brain dumps it after a time.

Can you remember what you had for breakfast the day before yesterday? What shirt you wore? How much lunch cost? How many steps there are in **preparing for exams** ? No. What makes you think you will remember some factoid from class, that you never heard of before? Sure you may remember it for a day or two, but that's it. Only when you make an effort to remember something repeatedly do you transfer that information into the other kind of memory, long term memory.

Long Term Memory:

This is the type of memory used when we want to store information in a more permanent way. This is either done by making information especially memorable (like getting burned means not to play with fire) or by repetition. Ever try to

remember a new phone number? How many time do you look it up before you remember it?

Course information is the same thing. If you're learning something new it's harder to remember. It takes constant review and trying to remember specific information before you actually can. Once something is transferred from short term to long term memory we say it has been learned. (or at least remembered)

Cramming fails because you're relying on short term memory. This type is fairly unreliable. Where were you at 2:32 yesterday afternoon? Your brain once knew. Maybe there was a crime in your neighborhood and the police want to know. Short term memory fails under stress. You doubt your memory. The same thing happens when you take an exam, it's stressful. What's the value of PI? Well I learned that yesterday....

Improving Your Memory

Anyone can improve their memory by following a 3 step process:

- Paying attention
- Applying constructivist methods
- Making information easy to remember

Paying attention

- Take an **active** role in learning.
- Memorization is sometimes needed but is not enough.
- Review information and quiz yourself for true understanding.
- Stop being **passive** in class and when studying.
    - Many students equate going to class and hearing the prof. with real learning.
    - LWI can be dangerous. (Listening While Ignoring)
    - It gives the impression that are trying but you can't remember anything later.
    - Thus you feel you did your job but couldn't explain anything when asked.

Constructivism

- Constructivism deals with correlating new information with old information.
- Thus, one constructs new understanding by fitting new information with prior understanding or experiences.

- Rather than memorizing random facts, try to relate them to prior knowledge.

- Think about new information and draw comparisons to other things you know.
- Think about similar information learned earlier.
- Draw analogies between old information and new information.
- This allows you to see the big picture and not get swamped with new information.

- Identify main points.
- Think about how these fit in with what you know from other experiences or classes.

Make information memorable

- Repetition, Repetition, Repetition, Repetition, Repetition, Repetition, Repetition, Repetition
- Read it, Write it, Say it, Explain it, Draw it, Ask questions about it.....
- Break down words by prefix or suffix. (Hydro relates to water)
- Use memory tricks:
- Make silly rhymes or sayings to remember lists.
- Use silly analogies to remember examples.
- Humor is a powerful memory trigger; the dumber the better.

1 Study in Short, Frequent Sessions.

It has been proven that short bursts of concentration repeated frequently are much more effective than one long session. So, even if you only have 10 minutes, DO IT. Take a break. Then study another 10 minutes. This “distributed learning” approach is highly efficient because it honors the way the brain likes to work. The brain needs recovery and

recharging time for “protein synthesis.” The rest periods are when your brain assimilates your effort. They are a powerful tool which many teachers do not acknowledge. To sit and study for hours and hours is not only boring, it creates fatigue, stress, and distraction. You cannot learn if you are fatigued, stressed, and distracted!

2 Take Guilt-Free Days of Rest.

This follows the same principle as above, but on a longer, daily time cycle. The reason for resting is to refresh oneself. However, if you feel guilty (“I really should be studying”) then your precious rest period has been used to create more stress. The brain will not absorb new data if it is stressed. On days off from studying, really enjoy yourself and do not feel bad about not studying.

3 Honor Your Emotional State.

Do not study if you are tired, angry, distracted, or in a hurry. When the brain is relaxed, it is like a sponge and it naturally absorbs data without effort. If you are emotionally stressed, your brain literally repels data. Forcing yourself to sit and study when your mind is on other things is a complete waste of time!

4 Review the Same Day.

When you learn something new, try to go over the points the same day. If you wait a few days and then make efforts to review the material, it will seem much less familiar. However, a quick review later in the day will tend to cement the

information into your brain so that the next “official” study session, you will recognize it and it will seem easy.

5 Observe the Natural Learning Sequence.

Think of the activities you did when you were in nursery school. Using your whole arm, you probably performed the song that goes: “Put your right hand in, Put your right hand out.” Then, in kindergarten, using your hand, you might have been asked to draw lines or circles with crayons. Later, in first grade, now holding the pencil with your fingers, you drew smaller lines and circles to create letters. Believe it or not, this natural learning sequence, moving from large to small, coarse to fine, still remains effective even though we are now older. When you study, if you try first to grasp the big picture and then fill in the details, you often have a more likely chance of success.

6 Use Exaggeration.

Why does Tendulkar or any other Batsman warm up by swinging two or three bats? Why do runners sometimes strap lead weights to their legs? In both cases, exaggeration during practice makes the final result seem easy. This concept can be applied to studying anything. For example, if you are studying spelling, exaggerate the sound of the letters to help to remember them. So for studying purposes, “naive” would be pronounced “NAY-IVY.” By getting used to this exaggerated pronunciation, the correct spelling seems obvious.

7 Prepare Your Study Environment.

If you require certain elements in your environment to help you study, try to always make these a priority. For example, do you need special lighting, silence, music, privacy, available snacks, etc.? Pay attention to what works for you and repeat it each time you study for best success.

8 Respect "Brain Fade."

It is normal for the brain to have an attrition rate and to forget things. This does not mean that you are stupid! Instead of getting mad about this fact, you should expect it and deal with it accordingly. See your brain as depositing layers of knowledge. As you place more information on top, the lower levels become older and less available to your immediate recall. The trick here is simply to review. Since we can anticipate the eventual fading of our memory, creating a review aspect to our study session will solve the problem. Once every two or three study sessions, simply review older material that you will be still needing to remember. Often, a quick overview is sufficient. Sometimes, a complete detailed study session of the older material is required. "Brain fade" is completely normal. (Unless you are gifted with a photographic memory, which is extremely rare.)

9 Create a Study Routine.

Generally, if you schedule certain times of the day to study, you will get into a routine and accomplish more. If you just "fit it in" during your day, chances are that there will never be any time. An effective way to do this is to literally mark it

down in your datebook calendar as if you have an appointment, like going to the doctor. For example: “Tuesday 3-4:30 P.M. — Study.”

10 Set Reasonable Goals.

One of the main reasons people do not reach their goals is because they set them too high. If you set goals that are manageable, even if they seem too simple, you get in the habit of accomplishing them and gradually you can set higher goals. Also, recognize the difference between long-term and short-term goals. Set your vision on the long-term dream, but your day-to-day activity should be focused exclusively on the short-term, enabling steps.

11 Avoid the Frustration Enemy.

Ironically, the quicker the person’s nervous system, the faster they learn. Yet, this fast nervous system also works overtime in being self-critical. So they are the ones who always think they aren’t going fast enough! In contrast, the “Type B,” less intense person who learns slower yet is more self-accepting, ends up ultimately learning the material in a shorter period of time. This is because he/she doesn’t waste energy blocking, getting upset, and thinking that they’re not good enough — they simply keep moving forward at a slower (but un-blocked) pace.

Improving Your Objective Test-Taking Skills

Students who have not learned good test-taking skills are working with an unseen handicap. In almost every objective test, they give up points needlessly due to undisciplined testing behavior, irrational responses to test items, or a variety of other bad habits. This tutorial focuses on overcoming this costly handicap.

Effective test-taking is not about gimmickry. It is not about outwitting your teachers in a guessing game or applying some magical formula to test-taking. Instead, the successful student must apply critical reading and thinking skills to the test and avoid making careless mistakes.

Cut Out Careless Errors

Let's begin by dealing with the careless kinds of mistakes that make students moan and groan when they get their tests back. First, let's state the obvious: read the directions carefully. Many students are in such a hurry to start the test that they do not read the instructions and make careless errors as a result.

Secondly, monitor your time so you do not get in a last-minute rush to finish the test. If there are 50 items and your teacher limits the testing time to 50 minutes, then you obviously have only about a minute to answer each question. The point here is not that you should time each item with a stopwatch. Simply monitor your progress periodically to make sure that you do not get caught in a time crunch.

Third, do not start second-guessing yourself and changing your original answers. Research has indicated that your first hunch is more likely to be correct. *You should only change answers to questions if you originally misread them or if you*

have encountered information elsewhere in the test that indicates with certainty that your first choice is incorrect.

Finally, allow enough time to go through the test to make sure that you have not left an item blank, mismarked the answer sheet, or made some other simple oversight.

Three Phases of Objective Test Taking

It might help to think of your objective test taking as falling into three distinct phases, which, if followed in sequence, should improve your final grade:

Phase One: Go through the test and answer only those items that you are confident you can answer correctly, skipping the other items momentarily. This strategy helps you build confidence and assures that you will get credit for what you know if you run low on time. Also, as you read and answer questions, you are making mental associations and reviewing the material. A term listed further into the test may be the one that was just on the "tip of your tongue" when you were trying to answer an earlier item.

Phase Two: Go back through the test and focus on items you skipped in the first phase, using a slightly different strategy: identify and eliminate what you are relatively sure are *incorrect* answers. Try cutting down on the possible choices to improve your odds.

- Based on the knowledge you have of the subject, eliminate choices that are definitely wrong or unlikely.
- On multiple-choice items, eliminate choices that do not link grammatically to the stem of the question. (Teachers may not phrase the incorrect answers as carefully as the correct one. If a choice is added to complete the stem and the result is an awkward or ungrammatical construction, it is most likely not the correct answer.

- Eliminate choices that would be logically excluded by other possible choices. For example, if the possible answers to an item are a.) sleeping, b.) listening, c.) staring, or d.) napping, since ***a.*** and ***d.*** mean basically the same thing, and since only <u>one</u> answer can be correct, then it is logical that <u>neither</u> could be the correct answer.

Phase Three: Once you have exhausted your knowledge and narrowed the choices remaining by eliminating unlikely answers, its time to make your best guess. But you don't have to make this a coin-flip decision. The next section looks at some issues that can help you improve your odds even further.

You're Not <u>Guessing</u>...You're Thinking Critically.

You can improve your odds by keeping in mind some important information about language:

- Be especially cautious of items that contain absolute terms--words like *always, never, invariably, none, all, every,* and *must*. It is not impossible, but it is much more difficult, to write an absolute statement that is accurate and valid. Try substituting a qualified term for the absolute one, like *frequently* or *typically* in place of *always* or *most*, or *some* in place of *all* or *every*. If the statement is more or less valid than the original one, take that into consideration in choosing your answer.
- The opposite tendency also gives you valuable clues. Sometimes, teachers will add qualifying or clarifying terms or expressions to the right answer on multiple-choice items and true statements on true-false tests to avoid having to argue with students or defend the item later. The result is longer, more detailed items. Consider this example, and note how the underlined terms in the statement make it more valid and less arguable:

Under typical conditions, most of a child's core values are set by approximately age ten.

On the other hand, the "decoys" on a multiple choice test and false statements on true-false questions may not be worded so carefully; they may sound a little too absolute or too "pat." With the qualifiers missing, the validity of the statement is highly suspect:

A child's values are set by age ten.

When you have applied everything you know to the question and are still forced to guess, choose multiple choice answers that are longer and more "qualified" in their phrasing. Apply the same "yard stick" to true-false items: guess true for more detailed, qualified statements and false for those that are short and contain absolute language.

True-False Items

Many students find true-false items especially difficult. A slight alteration in the phrasing of the item can make all the difference in the world, so these questions must be read and considered carefully. The basic ground rule for answering true-false items is that if any part of the statement is not true, then the student should select false as the answer.

By the same token, true-false items can be over-analyzed to the point that the student goes beyond the scope of the question, looking to find an extreme exception to what the question is testing or the "trick" suspected of lurking somewhere in the phrasing. Read carefully, but judge what the question is actually saying.

Some teachers show a definite tendency toward having predominantly true or predominantly false items on their true false tests. It would be well worth your time to monitor the proportion of true to false items on the first couple of tests. If you are forced to guess on an item and if your teacher has shown a definite

tendency on past tests toward mostly true or mostly false statements, choose whichever has been more frequent.

Analyses of a wide variety of teachers' tests indicate a greater percentage of true than false items. If no tendency has been apparent on past tests, your best option is to guess *true*.

THE MULTIPLE CHOICE EXAM

Often students anticipate their first multiple choice exam to be simply a matter of recognizing true statements. However, experience with these exams shows students that they are often asked to do more than just recognize textbook material. Multiple choice questions, they learn, require fine distinctions between correct and nearly-correct statements. They learn that these distinctions are not only of **Recognition**, but are distinctions that involve the thinking for **Synthesis, Analysis,** and **Application**. These higher-order thinking questions sometimes make the content of the questions unrecognizable. Besides not being fully prepared for these types of thinking questions, students often read the questions carelessly. Therefore, it is to the students' advantage to learn about the thinking required to answer multiple choice questions and to learn how to read the questions carefully.

Preparing/study for multiple choice exams

1. *Take a Learning Skills course to learn:*

   – how to recognize the various levels of learning that are tested in multiple choice questioning;

   – how to use new strategies for learning, remembering, and thinking.

2. *Join or form a study group* to practise making and answering multiple choice questions of various levels.
3. *Study old exams.* Examine each question to determine:

   – the level or type of thinking required of you (recognition, synthesis, analysis, application);

– the degree of difference between incorrect and correct alternatives.

4. *When studying the material consider groups of facts or groups of ideas that are similar in meaning.* While learning each group, pay special attention to the *differences* among the facts and ideas within each group. It may be effective to think of each fact or idea in terms of what each means or includes *and* what each does *not* mean or does *not* include. For a concept, consider what is *necessary* or *sufficient* to include. How do two similar concepts differ? Why is that difference important?

Writing Multiple Choice Exams

1. *Do the multiple choice items first* if your exam has types of questions other than multiple choice. Just reading the stems and alternatives acts as a warm-up to the material. (The stem is the question and the alternatives are the choices). Also, the ideas embedded in these multiple choice questions will fuel your thinking for doing the other parts of the exam.
2. *Read the directions carefully.* The directions usually indicate that some alternatives may be partly correct or correct statements in themselves, but not when joined to the stem. The directions may say: "choose the most correct answer" or "mark the one best answer." Sometimes you may be asked to "mark *all* correct answers."
3. Often you are required to answer up to 70 multiple choice questions in an hour or less. (Some have 200 questions to answer in 3 hours). This means you may have less than a minute, on average, to spend on each question. Some questions, of course, will take you only a few seconds, while others will require more time for thought. *Plan to progress through the exam in three ways:*

   – Read every question carefully but quickly, answering only those of which you are 100% certain. Put a "?" on those that need more thought.

– Then, examine/study the questions not yet answered. Answer those you are reasonably sure of without pondering too long on each. Erase the "?"

– Finally, study read the remaining unanswered questions. If you cannot come to a decision by reasoning or if you run out of time, guess. Erase the "?". Note that some examinations penalize "guessing" by subtracting points for incorrect answers. Check with your instructor. If there is no penalty, then a guess is better than a blank.

4. *Use the process of elimination procedure.* Eliminate the obviously incorrect alternatives.
5. *Read **all** of the stem and **every** alternative.*

   – Read the stem with each alternative to take advantage of the correct sound or flow that the correct answer often produces. Also, you can eliminate any alternatives that do not agree grammatically with the stem.

   – Some students find it effective to read the stem and anticipate the correct alternative before actually looking at the alternatives. If you generally do better on essay exams, this strategy may help you a great deal. Our research shows that one is three students scores better with this strategy alone!

6. *Consider "all of the above" and "none of the above."* Examine the "above" alternatives to see if all of them or none of them apply *totally*. If even one does not apply totally, do not consider "all of the above" or "none of the above" as the correct answer. Make sure that a statement applies to the question since it can be true, but not be relevant to the question at hand!
7. *Note negatives.* If a negative such as "none", "not", "never", or "neither" occurs in the stem, know that the correct alternative must be a fact or absolute and that the other alternatives could be true statements, but not the correct answer.

8. *Note superlatives.* Words such as "every", "all", "none", "always", and "only" are superlatives that indicate the correct answer must be an undisputed fact. In the social sciences, absolutes are rare.
9. *Note qualifying words.* "Usually", "often", "generally", "may", and "seldom" are qualifiers that *could* indicate a true statement.
10. *Study Qualifications.* Break the stem down into grammatical parts. Pull out the *bare subject* and *verb* (if it is in the stem), and then examine all the modifiers (qualifiers) to the subject and verb. This process ensures that you will examine every part of the stem.
11. *Changing Answers.* Research has shown that changing answers on a multiple choice or true-false exam is neither good nor bad: if you have a good reason for changing your answer, change it. The origin of the myth that people always change from "right" to "wrong" is that those (i.e. the wrong ones) are the only ones you will see when you review your exam – you won't notice the ones you changed from "wrong" to "right."

Following-up after your exam has been returned

Study your marked and returned exam in order to learn from your successes and mistakes, and to improve your performance on the next exam. This will pay dividends on future exams.

1. *Examine each question you did get correct.* Remember how you knew that the information was important when you studied. How did you study?
2. *Examine each question you did not get correct* in order to understand the find distinction between the correct alternative and the incorrect alternatives. Ask yourself why the correct answer is correct and why the other alternatives are incorrect.
3. *Determine the level of thought your instructor expects of you* by reading through all of the questions. Are you expected to recognise, analyse,

synthesise and/or apply the material that has been presented to you? Study accordingly for the next exam.

Rules when taking tests:

- Do the multiple choice items first if your exam has types of questions other than multiple choice.

  Merely reading the questions and possible answers will stimulate your thinking. Sometimes the ideas in the questions will get you thinking about other parts of the exams. You may even find hints in one question that will help you answer other questions.

- READ the whole question AND answers carefully.

What are the directions for the question? Questions may direct you to "Choose the false statement." , "Choose the true statement." or "Choose the best answer". Some options may be "All of the above" or "None of the above". Make sure you know what the question wants you to do.

Time is sometimes short during exams. Longer exams require some time management. Here are some tips:

Answer the questions you are confident about first. (READ carefully though) Mark the ones you have not answered; do them later.

Next, work on the questions that you can answer with a little thought. Save the really tough ones for later. Erase the mark when done.

Lastly work on the questions that are left. There should only be a few remaining. Work on them as you have time. Don't leave any blank.

- Some students do well by reading the question and then try to answer it without looking at the choices. Students who do well on essay exams can use this to advantage. One in three students can score better with this strategy alone.

- Read the question and scan the answers. Eliminate obviously wrong answers.

Be careful of "all of the above" and "none of the above" questions. These are sometimes the correct choice but are also often used as a distractor to confuse students. Be sure the choices available pertain to the question. Sometimes correct statements are included that have nothing to do with the question you're working on.

- Beware of negatives. If a negative such as "none", "not", "never", or "neither" occurs in the question then you're looking for a "catch". Read these carefully and be positive you understand the question. There will be an answer that matches even if your thinking is backwards.

- Words such as "every", "all", "none", "always", and "only" are superlatives that indicate the correct answer must be an undisputed fact.

- "Usually", "often", "generally", "may", and "seldom" are qualifiers that could indicate a true statement.

- Answer the questions without assuming too much. Don't be led astray by overanalyzing. Read the question and assume all the information is there for a reason. Ask for clarification if needed.

- What about when it's down to two possible answers?

Ask how the two answers differ (just the answers, ignore the question), maybe jot down how the two answers differ. Then look at the question again and ask

yourself "how is this difference important for this question?" If you really think there's absolutely no difference between the two answers (e.g. just two words that mean the same thing), then look again at the answers you've eliminated - maybe one of them is actually the correct one.

- Read the question over separately with each separate answer. Cover up all the other answers as you read the question over separately with each specific answer. This reduces the distracting effects of the wrong answers and can make it easier for you to see intuitively which answer makes better sense.

Other possible tricks:

(Caution: a clever instructor will use these generalizations to actually trick the students into thinking they are being clever, when they are actually falling into a trap)

1. Responses that use absolute words, such as "always" or "never" are less likely to be correct than ones that use conditional words like "usually" or "probably."
2. "Funny" responses are usually wrong.
3. "All of the above" is often a correct response. If you can verify that more than one of the other responses is probably correct, then choose "all of the above."
4. "None of the above" is usually an incorrect response, but this is less reliable than the "all of the above" rule. Be very careful not to be trapped by double negatives.
5. Look for grammatical clues. If the stem ends with the indefinite article "an," for example, then the correct response probably begins with a vowel.
6. The longest response is often the correct one, because the instructor tends to load it with qualifying adjectives or phrases.

7. Look for verbal associations. A response that repeats key words that are in the stem is likely to be correct.
8. Play the old Sesame Street game "Which of these things is not like the other?" Sometimes the distracters will be very similar to trick students into thinking the choice is between one or the other. The answer will be something unrelated.

Following-up after your exam has been returned

Meet with the professor to go over the exam. Look for patterns in your wrong answers.

- Did you miss the question because you were unprepared? Study more carefully.
- Did you misread the question? Take your time.
- Did you know the answer but panic? Be well prepared, it promotes confidence.

- Try to see what the instructor was looking for with each question: Recognition? Analysis? Synthesis based on understanding? Then adjust your studying.

Taking the Test

LOOK OVER THE TEST AND PACE YOURSELF

When you first get the exam, don't just plunge into answering test items. Instead, thumb through the pages and get the lay of the land. How many questions are there? How many different sections? Are some questions worth more points than others? Once you've looked through the entire test, try to estimate what pace you should maintain in order to finish approximately 10 minutes before the period is over. That way, you'll have a little time at the end to check for careless mistakes like skipped questions or misread items.

Some of the worst problems occur when students enter a time warp and forget to check the clock, or when they spend too much time on one or two difficult items. To prevent this from happening, one trick you can use is to scribble the desired "finish time" time for each section right on the test booklet. That way, you'll be prompted to check the clock after completing each part of the exam.

TAKE SHORT BREAKS

Try taking a few breaks during the exam by stopping for a moment, shutting your eyes, and taking some deep breaths. Periodically clearing your head in this way can help you stay fresh during the exam session. Remember, you get no points for being the first person to finish the exam, so don't feel like you have to race through all the items -- even two or three 30-second breaks can be very helpful.

DON'T SKIP AROUND

Skipping around the exam can waste valuable time, because at some point you will have to spend time searching for the skipped questions and re-reading them. A better approach is to answer each question in order. If you are truly baffled by a question, mark the answer you believe to be right, place a question mark next to the question, and come back to it later if you have time. Try to keep these flagged questions to a bare minimum (e.g., fewer than 10% of all items).

FIRST ANSWERS ARE USUALLY CORRECT

Don't speed through the items with the idea of going back to change answers you are unsure of. If you take time to think through each question, your initial answer will usually be the correct one. Although there are always exceptions to this rule, the best approach in most cases is to carefully answer each question the *first* time you go through the exam, and change only those answers that are clearly mistakes.

WHAT TO DO IF MORE THAN ONE ANSWER SEEMS CORRECT

If you're utterly stumped by a question, here are some strategies to help you narrow the field and select the correct answer:

1. Ask yourself whether the answer you're considering completely addresses the question. If the test answer is only partly true or is true only under certain narrow conditions, then it's probably not the right answer. If you have to make a significant assumption in order for the answer to be true, ask yourself whether this assumption is obvious enough that the instructor

would expect everyone to make it. If not, dump the answer overboard.

2. If you think an item is a trick question, think again. Very few instructors would ever write a question intended to be deceptive. If you suspect that a question is a trick item, make sure you're not reading too much into the question, and try to avoid imagining detailed scenarios in which the answer *could* be true. In most cases, "trick questions" are only tricky because they're not taken at face value.

If, after your very best effort, you cannot choose between two alternatives, try vividly imagining each one as the correct answer. If you are like most people, you will often "feel" that one of the answers is wrong. Trust this feeling -- research suggests that feelings are frequently accessible even when recall is poor (e.g., we can still know how we feel about a person even if we can't remember the person's name). Although this tip is not infallible, many students find it useful.