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STRATEGIES FOR TEST TAKING

Different kinds of tests require different kinds of test-taking strategies. This study guide will provide you with some helpful approaches for objective questions, essay questions, and test problems.

Objective Test Questions

True-false or multiple choice questions appear on objective tests. Since both types of question involve understanding a statement and making a choice in response to it, strategies for answering well are very similar.

- * Look for the central idea of each question. What is the main point?
- * Look for helpful key words like always, never, none, except, most, least. Underline key words if you are allowed to write on the test paper.
- * Try to supply your own answer to a multiple-choice question before you look at the choices then select the one closest to your own answer.
- * Mark an answer for every question. You may lose credit by guessing incorrectly, but an unanswered question will cost you credit automatically.
- * If all else fails and you have to guess an answer, then and only then take an “educated” guess.
- * Don't change your original answer unless you're completely sure it's wrong.

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Essay Test Questions

When you answer an essay question, you're showing how well you can explain and support an idea, not just what you know. Keep the following ideas in mind.

- * Read over all the essay questions before you start to write. Underline key words like define, compare, explain, describe or discuss. Think before you write. Jot down ideas on scratch paper and organize these ideas so you have an outline to use as you write your response.
- * Remember, a good answer:
 - Starts with a direct response to the question.
 - Mentions the topics or areas that the essay question describes.
 - Provides specific details as well as general information.
 - Uses the technical vocabulary of the course.
- * Write legibly. Instructors sometimes presume your ignorance if they can't read your writing.
- * Always write something and leave a space at the end so that you can add to your answer.
- * Proofread your essay answers. The few minutes you spend correcting errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling can improve your grade.

Problem-Solving Test Questions

When you work a problem, ask yourself three questions:

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1. What are you being asked to find?
2. What do you need to know in order to find this?
3. What are you already given on the problem to help you with your search?

After working through the problem, look back at what it asked you to find. Does your answer cover it? If not, go through the three questions again.

Good problem solvers have these characteristics:

- * Positive attitude. They believe that problems can be solved by careful, persistent (though sometimes lengthy) analysis, not by fast answers based on previous knowledge.
- * Concern for accuracy. They read a problem several times trying to understand it. They review their judgments and conclusions, avoid guessing, and check their work.
- * Methodical planning. They break work into parts and then solve it step by step, starting with the simplest step.
- * Concentration. They use their energy to solve problems by talking to themselves about what they are doing, creating mental pictures, relating the problem to familiar experiences, counting, or drawing pictures.

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