



Strategies for Taking Tests

WARREN MOTT HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT
JANUARY 2021

Why tests?

- ▶ Assessment – what do you know?
- ▶ Accountability – what did we teach you?
- ▶ Anxiety – feelings and emotions
 - ▶ Helpful or harmful?
 - ▶ How intense?
 - ▶ What do we do? – PREPARE!

Presentation Topics

- ▶ Before the Test
- ▶ During the Test
- ▶ After the Test
- ▶ Types of Test Questions

Before the Test – Good Habits

- ▶ Do you *understand* the material?
- ▶ Attend class regularly
- ▶ Take hand-written notes; rewrite them or summarize
- ▶ START






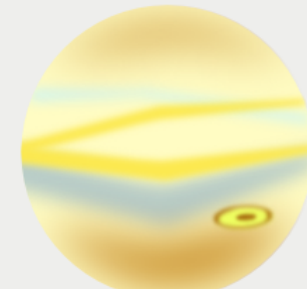





Before the Test – Studying

- ▶ Organize your study area
- ▶ Review material in meaning chunks (chapters, sections, etc.)
- ▶ Analyze past tests, past study guides, or past test-like questions*
- ▶ Break study sessions into shorter chunks of time (30-40 min), over a longer period of time (1-2 weeks)
- ▶ Practice recalling information without notes; make flash cards
- ▶ Practice writing out essay or short-answer questions
- ▶ Use mnemonic techniques to memorize lists and definitions
- ▶ Involve other people (family, friends, etc.); “teach them” the material

Mnemonic Device

The image displays a mnemonic device for the planets, starting with the Sun on the left. Each planet is represented by a colored circle or image, followed by a word and the planet's name. The words are: My, Very, Excellent, Mother, Just, Served, Us, Nachos. The planet names are: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune.

								
My	Very	Excellent	Mother	Just	Served	Us	Nachos	
u r c u r y	e n u s	a r t h	a r s	u p i t e r	a t u r n	r a n u s	e p t u n e	

During the Test

- ▶ Arrive early
- ▶ Take a few deep breaths
- ▶ Do a quick “mind dump” of information you don’t want to forget
- ▶ Survey the entire test; organize your time; are sections weighted differently?
- ▶ Answer the easiest questions first, to help yourself calm down. Matching questions are often good to start with because they provide a reminder of important terms and definitions.
- ▶ Keep an eye on the clock. Make sure you'll have time to complete the test sections with the highest value, if not the entire test.
- ▶ Do NOT leave any multiple choice questions blank*

After the Test – Analyze

- ▶ After your test has been graded, go over it to determine areas of strength and weakness in your test-taking skills.
 - ▶ **Information Problem** - I don't remember encountering this material at all or I glossed over it or did not have it in my notes.
 - ▶ **Retention Problem** - I studied this but could not call it up from memory.
 - ▶ **Misinterpretation of Information** - I incorrectly understood the information when I initially read the text or heard it in lecture.
 - ▶ **Vocabulary Problem** - I did not know the correct meaning or assumed an incorrect meaning of vocabulary.
 - ▶ **Jumping to Conclusions** - I did not fully consider all the responses.
 - ▶ **Test Answers Not Checked** - I didn't use extra test time to review my answers.

Question Types – Multiple Choice

- ▶ Narrow your choices down by eliminating obviously wrong answers
- ▶ Try to decide what the answer to the question is before you read all of the choices, but: Be sure to read all answers before selecting one. Sometimes two answers will be similar and only one will be correct.
- ▶ Do not be afraid to change an answer if you feel strongly about it.
- ▶ Do not be discouraged if you cannot answer a question. Leave it and go on. You may find the answer or clues to the answer in subsequent questions.
- ▶ Beware of questions with “no”, “not”, and “none.” These words easily change the meaning of questions.
- ▶ If two answers are opposite, one is probably correct.
- ▶ Choices with the following words are often incorrect: always, never, all, must
- ▶ Choices with the following words are often correct: seldom, generally, tend to, probably, usually

Guessing – Seriously!?

- ▶ Do NOT leave multiple choice questions blank
 - ▶ Choose the longest, most precise answer.
 - ▶ Choose the answer that is in the middle.
 - ▶ Choose the answer that first caught your eye.



Question Types – True or False

- ▶ Look for open and closed words in the question.
 - ▶ Open words like “often” or “usually” are found in true statements
 - ▶ Closed words like “never” and “always” are found in false statements.
- ▶ Pay attention to statements with two clauses - both must be true in order to be the correct answer.
 - ▶ “Water can be a solid, and it is flammable.”

Question Types – “Trick Questions”

- ▶ If you think an item is a trick question, think again. These are NOT common.
- ▶ 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

Question Types – Essay

- ▶ Read over all the essay questions before you start to write. Underline key words like define, compare, explain, summarize, etc.
- ▶ Borrow answers from other sections of the test
- ▶ Organize your essay: briefly outline all the topics you want to write about
- ▶ Think before you write. Remember, a good answer:
 - ▶ Starts with a direct response to the question.
 - ▶ Mentions the topics or areas described in the question.
 - ▶ Provides specific as well as general information.
 - ▶ Uses the technical vocabulary of the course.

Math & Science Tests

- ▶ Do the easy ones first.
- ▶ Read the problem.
 - ▶ Determine exactly what you are required to find.
 - ▶ What does the answer look like? - is it a speed? A temperature? An energy?
- ▶ Estimate the answer before you start to work on the problem.
 - ▶ It helps to have a rough idea of the size of the answer.
- ▶ Include the units with all answers and round them to the proper place.
- ▶ Try to see the exam problem as another example of a problem you have already solved or studied.

Math & Science Tests – cont'd

- ▶ In preparing for problem exams it is important that you work many problems.
 - ▶ For most students the course grade or exam grade is directly proportional to the number of problems they do.
 - ▶ Don't spend all your time on a few very difficult problems. Rather, do many of the easier ones until you are certain of your ability.
- ▶ See your teacher for pre-test help when you need it, and come prepared with a list of specific questions.
 - ▶ Show the teacher your attempts at solving the problem
- ▶ Go over every test after you take it.
 - ▶ Learn how to do the problems you missed.
 - ▶ Anything you do not understand now will return to haunt you later in the course.



START

Sleep. Turn Off. Be Active. Read. Take Control.