Exams and Tests

There are three equally important parts to a test or an exam:

1. Preparing for the test or exam
   Ask your tutor about the test

   • What will the test cover? Make a list of key (main) topics
   • How long the test will take – (1 hour, 2 hours)
   • Date, time and place of the test
   • How many questions and what type? – (multi-choice, short answer, essay)

   Organise study materials and schedule study time

   • Collect your class notes, textbook notes, assignments, past quizzes, lab notes, and check that none are missing. Check with class mates
   • Divide material into manageable units. Create mind maps
   • Create a study plan
   • Organise short blocks of study time rather than long blocks. This will help you learn and retain more

   Anticipate the test questions

   • Find main themes in your learning objectives. Refer to past tests
   • Turn learning objectives into questions.
   • Use the study guide, if there is one
   • Check your textbook for study questions, problems, or case studies
   • Listen to your tutor for clues like ‘this is really important’. Highlight them

   Doing your study

   • Check the list of key (main) themes/topics. Write down as much as you know. Refer to your books and fill in any gaps. Actively work with your notes. Test yourself constantly. Ask your tutor if you can’t find the answers
   • Create study charts or mind maps, outlining course content and grouping important points, facts and ideas that relate to each topic
   • Join a study group or other students so that you can discuss and share your ideas
   • Write cue cards with important information, examples and definitions on them; carry them with you and refer to them during the day
Day of the test

- Write down on paper what you know about the subject to help you remember
- Look up and read about what you don’t know. Don’t try to study just read, write and remember

2. Taking the test - general test strategies

- Arrive early, about 10 to 15 minutes before the test start time
- Make memory notes: As soon as the test is handed out, quickly jot down on the back of the test notes relative to the questions (a definition, a formula, a date)
- Preview the test: Skim through the test, looking at the type and number of questions asked. Budget your time; work out the easy questions
- Do the easy questions first: Once you’ve finished the easy questions, return to the more challenging ones. Remember a question not answered is a question wrong
- Carefully read directions: Make sure you know what you have to do before you start. If the directions are unclear or ambiguous, ask. Underline all the key (main) words and be sure you know what the question is asking
- Budget your time: Decide roughly how many minutes you can allow for each question or section so that you finish the test. Allow time for checking your answers

3. Learn from the test for next time

- Identify what you did well; what you could have done better
- Analyse any errors you made and work out how to do better next time

Memory Techniques

- Poems or rhymes: Columbus sailed the ocean blue in fourteen hundred and ninety two
- Acronyms: “HOMES” to recall the Great Lakes on Canada/US border: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior
- Acrostics: Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain (rainbow colours Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet)
- Word Part Clues: Practice or practise - c = clinic where the doctor practices s = skipping
- Visualise: Make a picture in your mind of a cell as a little M & M lolly, each part linked to what your body does, i.e. brain = nucleus, muscles = mitochondria, skin = cell membrane

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