

Earning good grades is one way to improve your GPA and ultimately, help you earn scholarship money, college aid or employment opportunities. Learning how to study and how to take tests is a great way to invest in your future. By following some test taking tips listed below, you should be on your way to increasing your test scores.

Tips Before the Test

Classroom habits are very important, such as taking good notes and listening carefully to lectures. Teachers often give clues on what is important to write down. Always write down anything on the smart or chalk board. Make sure your notes are neat and organized. If you miss class, get notes for the time you missed. Doing your homework is an easy way to reinforce what you learned in class. If you do not understand something, ask your teacher for help. There are extra help sessions available at TCTC before, after, and during school. Stop by The Dugout for further information.

Plan ahead, and begin to study the material several times a day as often as possible. If you review the material often, starting the first day that new material is introduced to you, then studying for a test will not only be easier, but studies show that it will result in higher test scores. Reread difficult sections. Complex ideas may become clearer during the second reading. Have all your required reading done ahead of time. When reading the text, pay close attention to words or phrases written in bold or italic. Plan specific times for studying, and stick to the plan. Do not allow yourself to be tempted to not study.

Study periods are best when done in short periods of time. Try to avoid studying long periods of time; take short breaks. Plan frequent study periods during the week. Being well prepared for a test helps to avoid test anxiety, so avoid cramming for a test.

Questions to ask yourself: What subject material will be on the test and do I understand everything? If you do not know every area on the test, then study weak areas heavily. Seek help from your teacher in areas where you still are struggling.

Choose a good space that is quiet and free from distractions and interruptions or one that is free from temptations. Make sure it is comfortable, but not as comfortable as your bed—too easy to nap.

A good study system is essential to increase test scores. Utilize index cards for terms or definitions by placing a term or definition on one side with the explanation on the reserve side. Carry these index cards with you to study whenever you have a few minutes. Reading the text book out loud is another great way to study. Pretend you are the teacher and teach yourself the test material. Re-do old tests or homework assignments. Do end of chapter exercises if available in your textbook. Rewrite your notes. Outline and summarize chapters to help you learn the test material. Make out a sample test with fill-in sentences and term definitions to use as a study aid.

Memory aids can help you to remember information. Take the first letter from each word and make a nonsense word or make a saying using words. Another aid is to put the words to music, and sing a little tune. Visualize in your mind something you can associate with the word or concept.

Study groups or a study partner can be a useful resource for studying for a big test, but make sure you only study with others who are serious about studying.

Being well rested is one of the best ways to do well on a test. Eat a healthy and light breakfast the morning of the test.

Tips During the Test

The day of the test arrive to class early so you do not have to worry about being late. Have everything you need to take the test. Take a few deep and slow breaths to help you relax. Think positive. Have a “Yes, I can do it” attitude. Never stop answering questions during a test because you think you are going to fail it. Give 110% and you just may surprise yourself.

Pay attention to directions given by your teacher and read slowly and carefully the instructions written on the test. If you have a question, ask your teacher or test proctor.

Scan the test for the amount of questions and estimate how much time you have to complete each question. Decide which questions count for the most points, and plan to spend the most time on those questions. Write down memory aids or formulas in the margin of your test if permitted for quick reference. Complete the easiest questions first.

During the test, do not let your mind wander. Stay focused. If you get stuck on a question, try to pull out a fact and you may find the answer as part of an-

other question. Use all the time given, never hurry. Check the time periodically, and pace yourself accordingly. Mark questions that you plan to come back to at the end if you do not know an answer. If you complete the test early, check your answers. During the last five minutes, go over the test and try to guess if there is not a penalty for guessing. Write legibly.

Tips for Different Types of Tests

Multiple Choice Think of your answer before you read the choices, so you are not confused from incorrect answers called distracters. Read all the choices and eliminate answers you know are not right. If you are still unsure of your answer use the following general rules: longer items with more information tend to be correct, positive choice is more likely true than a negative one, most correct answers are in the middle, follow grammatical clues, such as “an” on the end of the stem will mean the answer starts with a vowel, overly technical answers are *usually* wrong, and your first choice is *usually* the correct answer. Distracters are usually absolute statements, unfamiliar, jokes, or have low or high numbers. Be careful when answering any questions that contain the words seldom, always, only and never.

Essay The best way to get a high score on an essay question is to have a good grasp on the subject material. Make sure you read the question carefully before you answer and follow the direction of the verb used in the question; e.g. do not list items if the question ask you to contrast things. Do an outline of your response, for it will help you to organize your thoughts and help you write faster. If you do not have time to finish, your teacher may give you points for the outline. More details are better, so write everything down. Neatness counts. Re-phrase the question in your opening line. If you are unsure of dates or numbers, use the word “approximately”. Use correct grammar and complete sentences. Check for errors. If you do not know the answer, give an intelligent guess. Never leave the question unanswered. If you do not know the answer, write down as much as you can for possible partial credit. Make sure you budget your time so you can finish your test in time.

True-False Usually there are more true answers than false answers. If any part of a true/false question is false, then the answer is false. Qualifiers like all, most, never, always and every *usually* lead to a false answer. Qualifiers such as usually, sometimes and generally *usually* lead to a true answer. Answer all questions. If unsure go with your first choice. You have a 50% chance of being correct.

Short Answer/Fill in the Blank Note the grammatical structure of the sentence to help you figure out whether the missing answer is a verb, noun, or pronoun. Try to answer the question, even if you are not sure of the answer. You can also write down a definition, even if that is not requested, since many teachers may give you some credit for this answer. Come back at the end of the test, because there might be a question inside of the test that can lead you to your answer. Write down everything you need to answer the question. Make sure you budget your time so you can finish your test in time. Neatness counts.

Matching Read both columns before answering. Do the easiest questions first. As you answer, draw a line through the term you matched.

Open Book When studying for this type of test, place removable tabs or post-it-notes on the pages with important data. If you are permitted a separate piece of paper, use it to write down formulas and a table of contents. Answer the easy questions first that do not require you to open your book.

Math Read the question carefully to make sure you answer it correctly. Before you start, estimate what the answer will be and see if your final answer is close. Write down the formulas in the margin of your paper, so you can reference them during the test. Show all of your work; you might get partial credit if your answer is wrong. Make neat columns and numbers. Check your figures and answers. Look for careless mistakes.

After the Test

If it was a long test like the OGT, SAT or ACT, shake it off. Do not agonize over your answers. If you get a test back, check your answers. If you get to keep the test use it as a study guide for a final or mid-term test. Learn from your mistakes and apply this knowledge to your next test.

Remember to stay positive when you are studying and when you are taking a test. Never let failure be an option! Remember you have not failed until you have given up. You can do this!!!!

Good Luck!