



PENTUCKET

TEST TAKING

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Test Taking Tips

1. Keep a positive attitude during the test and try to stay relaxed. If you start to feel nervous put your pencil down and take a few deep breathes to relax.
2. Do the easiest problems first. This will help build your confidence.
3. Answer all the questions; it is better to have some answer than no answer. Before guessing, try to eliminate one or more of the choices.
4. Always read the whole question carefully, don't make assumptions about what the question might be asking.
5. Ask the instructor for clarification if you don't understand what the directions are asking.
6. Write legibly on essay questions. If the grader can't read what you wrote they will most likely mark it wrong.
7. Be direct and concise with written answers.
8. Plan your time. Don't spend too much time on questions that you don't know. Don't worry if other students finish before you; focus on the test in front of you.
9. Review, edit, correct – make sure that you have filled in all of your answers in the correct spaces, copied down mathematical problems correctly, and checked your grammar
10. Keep your eyes on your own paper. You could appear to be cheating and cause unnecessary trouble for yourself.



Reducing Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is when a student excessively worries about doing well on a test. This can become a major hindrance on test performance and cause extreme nervousness and memory lapses among other problems. The following tips should help:

1. Be well prepared for the test, this is the best way to reduce test anxiety.
2. Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test.
3. Exercise the day before and get a good night's sleep.
4. Eat a healthy breakfast the morning of the test.
5. Show up early, so you don't have to worry about being late.
6. Stay relaxed, if you begin to get nervous take a few deep breathes slowly to relax yourself and then get back to work.
7. Skim through the test so you have a good idea how to pace yourself, but remember the test is not timed.
8. Focus on the questions. Don't daydream.
9. If you are feeling really nervous before the test, speak with your school counselor or teacher.



Do's and Don'ts of Preparation

Do- make a list of what you need to study, prioritize the list, stick to it

Do- make a schedule for studying

Do- begin studying no less than 30-90 minutes after a meal

Do –find a quiet, comfortable study place

Do- form study groups with 3-4 focused people, at the most

Do- get a good night's sleep and eat breakfast in the morning

Do- review notes and study guides, and read chapter summaries in text books

Don't – wait until the last minute

Don't – study before going to bed

Don't – study in crowded, noisy places

Don't – waste time studying unimportant material

Don't – study with friends who may distract you

Don't – run on empty

Don't – let yourself get overwhelmed



Place for Studying

- Study in the same room every night. Your mind will begin to associate that place with study and concentration will be easier.
- Only as a last resort should the kitchen, family room or living room be your headquarters for homework.
- Close off, as much as possible, all noise from radio, television, and conversation. Studies show that one becomes more tired doing homework with such a background. There is nothing whatsoever to the theory that you study better to the accompaniment of a radio. Routine writing work - OK, studying - NO.
- Clear your desk of all materials except those needed for a specific subject. Keep magazines, cell phones, IPODS and other distracting types of material out of sight and out of reach.
- Have adequate light on your work.
- Avoid studying in an easy chair or a bed. The best place to study is sitting at a place that is neither too comfortable nor too relaxed.
- Keep a file of all papers returned by your teachers. When a corrected paper is returned, do not simply look at your mark and throw the paper away. Go over the paper carefully to find out why you made mistakes so that they will not happen again. Keep all corrected tests, compositions, reports, etc., for later reference.

Have a small bookshelf next to your desk for the basic reference books you will be consulting frequently: dictionary, almanac, thesaurus, one-volume encyclopedia, and a grammar and usage manual.



Studying Tips

- Unless necessary, do not study immediately after school. Afternoons are for sports, errands, odd jobs around the house, hobbies, and for extracurricular activities at school. Your mind needs a change of pace after five hours in the classroom.
- Plan on about three hours each night to be set aside for study. If a given evening's assignments require less time, use the balance for required or extra outside reading. An ideal plan would be to get in a short period before supper for your easiest written homework. Then only two hours or so would remain after supper. Start with the hardest assignments first because this is when your mind will be at its most efficient.
- Have a definite time for study and begin promptly at the designated time. You will become accustomed to buckling down to study at that time and you will find yourself less inclined to distractions.
- Tell your friends about your study hours; try to arrange everything to avoid distractions.
- Put aside everything except your lessons. Begin with real determination or you will soon find yourself daydreaming and distracted.
- Know what your assignments are. Use your agenda book to keep track of all assignments. Also, consult Schoolloop. Do not depend on memory. This may necessitate a call to a classmate, and such a call seldom ends after the desired information is obtained.
- Look over your assignments before starting and budget your time according to the demands. Decide how much time you will need to do justice to each subject.
- Go over each assignment before doing it in detail; be sure that you know just what you are supposed to do.
- Follow some order in studying your subjects, e.g. most difficult first and easier later; or alternate written and reading assignments, etc. Experiment with different arrangements in the order of your subjects until you eventually hit upon the plan which gives you the best results. Do not merely study them in the order of your school periods or in the order you happen to take out your books that night.
- Do one subject at a time – do not leapfrog back and forth. On the other hand, do not spend more than one hour on a subject that gives you difficulty. Go on and get everything else out of the way and then go back to that subject.
- A good student never feels that homework is finished when written homework is finished. Most students complete their daily written work - but the better student spends time on additional study or review.
- Do not allow long-range assignments - book reports, term papers, etc. to be put off until the very last night. Do not postpone. Begin work on them long before they are due, and work on them when you can spare some time.
- Never allow a subject to get ahead of you. This is especially true in language and math for what you learn one day will be needed in the work that follows.

The law of diminishing returns applies to studying. In cases where a great deal of work must be done on a given night, an hour spent in the morning will be more productive than an hour or two spent "burning the midnight oil."

Strengthening the Memory

- Focus your complete attention upon the things you have to memorize.
- The better you understand what you are trying to memorize the more sense it will make, the more likely it is to stick with you. Meaningful material is forgotten more slowly than meaningless information. For this reason, it is important to understand material you wish to remember.
- Classify, arrange, and organize the material before attempting to commit it to memory. This may require a written (or mental) outline to put the material into a logical unit.
- Try where possible to connect the material with something with which you have already had some experience.
- A helpful technique is to recite aloud to yourself whatever has to be memorized.
- Memorizing must be done in short active periods. Four fifteen-minute periods during the day (or homework) are better than a continuous hour-long period.
- Put vocabulary words, formulas, dates, and definitions on index cards. Study them, recite them, and quiz yourself. Have someone at home quiz you.

Tips For Remembering:

ACRONYMS

An acronym is an invented combination of letters. Each letter is a cue to, or suggest, an item you need to remember.

Example:

PEMDAS, sequence in solving or evaluating math equations

Parenthesis/ **E**xponents/**M**ultiplication/**D**ivision/**A**ddition/**S**ubtraction

ACROSTICS

An acrostic is an invented sentence or poem with a first letter cue:

The first letter of each word is a cue to an idea you need to remember.

Example: **P**lease **E**xcuse **M**y **D**ear **A**unt **S**ally (PEMDAS, above)

RHYME – KEYS: (for ordered or unordered lists)

First, memorize key words that can be associated with numbers.

Example: Bun=one; shoe=two, tree=three, door=four, hive=five, etc.

Create an image of the items you need to remember with key words.

Four basic food groups—diary products; meat, fish, and poultry; grains; and vegetables

Think of cheese on a bun (one), livestock with shoes on (two), a sack of grain suspended in a tree (three), a door to a room stocked with fruits and vegetables (four)

Strengthening the Memory (cont.)

THE METHOD OF LOCI: (for approximately twenty items)

Select any location that you have spent a lot of time in and know well. Imagine yourself walking through the location, selecting clearly defined places—the door, sofa, refrigerator, shelf, etc. Imagine yourself putting objects that you need to remember into each of these places by walking through this location in a direct path.

*****Again, you need a standard direct path and clearly defined locations for objects to facilitate the retrieval of these objects. *****

Example: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Richard Nixon: you could imagine walking up to the door of your location and seeing a dollar bill stuck in the door; when you open the door Jefferson is reclining on the sofa and Nixon is eating out of the refrigerator.

THE KEYWORD METHOD: (for foreign language vocabulary)

First, after considering the foreign word you need to remember, select a key word in English that sounds like the foreign word.

Next, imagine an image which involves the key word with the English meaning of the foreign word.

Example: Consider the Spanish word “cabina” which means “phone booth.” For the English keyword, you might think of “cab in a” You could then invent an image of a cab trying to fit in a phone booth. When you see the word “cabina” on the test, you should be able to recall the image of the cab and you should be able to retrieve the definition “phone booth.”

THE IMAGE - NAME TECHNIQUE: (for remembering names)

Simply invent any relationship between the name and the physical characteristics of the person.

Example: If you had to remember Shirley Temple’s name, you might ingrain the name in the memory by noticing that she has “curly” (rhymes with Shirley) hair around her temples.

CHAINING: (for ordered or unordered lists)

Create a story where each word or idea you have to remember cues the next idea you need to recall.

Example: If you had to remember the words Napoleon, ear, door, and Germany, you could invent a story of Napoleon with his ear to a door listening to people speak in German.

Methods of Study

The SQ3R Method of Study

The SQ3R plan of study consists of five steps: **Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review**. Careful experiments have shown that those who become proficient in this method learn more in less time and retain what they have learned longer than those who use less scientific techniques.

SURVEY. Before studying a lesson in detail, it is helpful to get an overall picture of what you are going to study. By surveying the material to be covered, you will get a general idea of what has to be done. Once you have the general picture of what you are going to study, you will find it much easier to understand and remember the details. Getting a bird's eye view will help you to avoid trying to memorize a lot of seemingly unrelated details. Here are some suggestions on how to survey an assignment.

- Scan (look over without reading carefully) the complete assignment.
- Watch the different kinds of type in the headings. See if the author has outlined his main ideas by using a darker type for headings and other important ideas.
- Read all main headings and the first few sentences under each one.
- Look carefully at the illustrative material (pictures, graphs, and tables), for they are meant to present some of the material in a more organized and understandable way.
- Try to get a general understanding of what the assignment is about and how the information is arranged.
- Look at the end of the selection to see if there are summary paragraphs, review questions, lists of key words, or other guides to help you find the main points in the selection.

QUESTION. Reading an assignment and later being unable to remember what you have just read is a very common problem that can be solved by learning how to ask the right questions before you even start to read. When you ask questions about the material you are going to read, the following things happen:

- Asking questions helps you concentrate by giving you something to look for while you read.
- Questions give you definite things to look for that help you to better understand the general idea of the lesson.
- Asking questions gives you a purpose for reading the material.
- When you find answers to your questions, you will remember better than if you merely read the same information.

Some examples of good questions to ask yourself while studying an assignment might be:

- What is the main idea that the author is trying to tell us?
- How does the author try to prove his idea?
- What exact facts have been given that can be used to answer the question?
- Will the information that you are studying be useful in taking a test, in answering questions that might be raised in class, or in preparing a report?

Methods of Study (cont.)

The more you learn to ask questions about the lesson you are about to study, the easier it will become to think of other questions. Also, whatever you are reading will become more interesting, and you will be able to remember what you have learned for a longer time.

READ. Although to most people studying usually means reading, studying is not quite as simple as reading. Reading alone is often not the most important part of studying. In studying follow these steps:

- Read the assignment carefully paragraph by paragraph.
- Compare what the author says with what you already know, what has been said in class, and what the author has said earlier in the selection.
- Relate what the author says in each section to the total view of the chapter which you obtain in the survey.
- Try to find answers to the questions you have asked yourself.
- Do not skip by new words. Look at the root, prefix, and suffix of the word and then try to get a fuller meaning from the context of the sentence. Look in the dictionary for important-looking words.

Spend time studying all tables, graphs, and pictures, for the author had a purpose in including these illustrations. The more time you spend in getting the meaning from them, the clearer the rest of the material in the chapter is likely to be.

RECITE. Once you have surveyed the lesson, developed questions to ask, and read the material, you should practice reciting what you have learned. Recitation is little more than testing what you have just studied.

- Think about what you have studied and recite aloud the main ideas and facts you have learned.
- If you are preparing for a test or quiz, make up questions you think the teacher might ask on this material and decide how you would answer them.
- If you are preparing for a class discussion, anticipate points that should be explained, and note things you wish to have cleared up.

REVIEW. After you have finished the first four steps, reviewing the material is easy. Some suggestions you might follow are:

- Look over the entire passage but do not re-read.
- Look at the headings and subheadings to make sure you have a complete picture of the assignment.

Pick out the important points and either make an outline, or make marginal notes, or underline, or highlight to impress the material on your mind so that you will be able to recall it later.

General Preparation for Examinations

- There are several things that should always be part of your preparation for tests and examinations: a well-organized notebook, constant review, and a period of study immediately prior to the test.
- Cramming is shortsighted and superficial, and results in merely an outer semblance of knowledge. Cramming is beneficial only when it is on material that has been studied previously. If it is the last resort to make up for what has not been done during the week or month, the hours of cramming will yield disappointing results.
- It is much more sensible to prepare in stages so that you never are caught short and have to depend on last minute cramming.
- Ask your teacher the type of test that is coming: objective (true-false, fill in the blanks, multiple choice, matching, etc.); or essay (questions that require discussion, explanation, and comparison, etc.)
- Objective tests measure your ability to recognize and recall. You are tested for memory, relationship of material, and detailed material.
- Essay tests are usually general in character, suggesting broad topics and leaving the student a chance to show his ability to organize and express clearly what he knows.
- To prepare for an objective test: Pay particular attention to small facts and details. Make up your own true-false or fill-in-the-blanks questions as you slowly go through the chapter. Facts, rather than general ideas, are what you are looking for.
- To prepare for an essay type test, study for a thorough familiarity with the important ideas. Attempt to grasp the relationships between these ideas and between each idea and facts connected with it. Again, try to make a list of questions that your teacher might ask.

For either type of test, look over the tests given previously by the same teacher to determine the type of questions asked, as well as the answers that are expected.



Preparing for Specific Tests

Taking an Objective Test

- Read the directions very carefully.
- Look for the clues in the phrasing of each question which may help you in answering it.
- In true-false questions, be on the lookout for such generalization as never, always, only, every, etc.
In the case of confusing items, reword them to see if you can arrive at their meanings.
- Skip difficult items and return to them later. Often information supplied later in the test will help you to answer them.
- In true-false tests, decide immediately whether a question is true or false, and do not change. It has been proven that three of every four answers changed afterwards will be changed from correct to incorrect.
- In case of multiple choice questions, immediately discard the two or three obviously wrong answers, and narrow your choice to two possible answers.
- In matching tests, make the obvious matches immediately, and then use the process of elimination.
- In all objective tests, guess at answers unless there is a penalty for guessing. Play a hunch or act on vague associations if nothing more definite occurs to you. Stick to your first choice for an answer unless you are sure later that you were wrong.
- Pay no attention to other students who complete the test before you do or who seem to be farther along than you are. Proceed at your own pace.

Taking an Essay Test

- Read all the questions first, and if some are optional, decide carefully which ones to answer.
- Notice how many points each question is worth, and spend a proportionate amount of time on each question.
- Divide up your time and keep one eye on the clock. Do not spend a great deal of time on a few questions and then run short of time on later questions.
- Read each question two or three times to make sure you understand it. Many students fail essay tests simply because under pressure they misunderstand it or misread the questions and thus do not answer the question asked.
- Concentrate on one question at a time.
- Do a little thinking and planning first for each question. Organize your answer. If time permits, jot down on scrap paper a few ideas before beginning to write on the test paper.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, try to reason it out.
- When a mental block arises, move on to another question and return later when an idea comes to you.
- A good idea is to leave several blank lines between each question in the event that additional information comes to mind later.
- Plan to allow yourself five minutes or so at the end of the test to review all answers and make any additions or corrections.

Helpful Resources

<http://www.howtostudy.org>

<http://www.how-to-study.com>

<http://www.educationatlas.com/study-skills.html>

<http://www.testtakingtips.com>

<http://www.westboomfield.k12.mi.us/testing/2/tips.html>

<http://www.ulc.psu.edu/studyskills/testtaking.html>

