

# Test Taking Skills

## ♦ Preparing for the Test

1. Have all the necessary materials: study guides, handouts, notes, homework, textbook, and some index cards.
2. Begin studying a week before the test: review old material daily; if reading out loud helps you to remember, read out loud.
3. Go through the notes: highlight critical vocabulary, ideas the teacher emphasized in class, and topic sentences. Number supporting sentences.
4. Anticipate test questions: what questions did the teacher ask; what questions were assigned from the book? Ask your friends to predict the essay question.
5. Put words to be learned on one side of an index card and a definition on the other side. Practice by reading the definitions and then by reading the words. Do the same with formulas.
6. Review the materials before you go to bed. While you sleep a little person walks around in your brain and files things for you.
7. Wake up and review the material again. You will discover that the little person did a good job! Don't wake up at the last minute and dash to school. Give yourself time to wake up!

## ◆ Taking the Test

1. Make certain that you have your study notes, good pencils with clean erasers, pens available.
2. Listen to the instructions regarding time, points, use of notes, corrections or additions to the test.
3. As soon as you are told to get started, write down all the "memorized" items on the back of the test.
4. Skim the entire test quickly and decide how much time you have per section. Read the essay questions and create a space to jot down an idea as you take the rest of the test.
5. Read the directions for each section and do all the questions that you are certain to know. Don't dwell on the ones you don't know.

**BIG HINT:** Many times other questions will trigger the answers to earlier questions that you have skipped!

## ◆ Strategies for Special Types of Questions

**Matching-** Read the longer section and then find the answer on the shorter section. Cross off the answer or lightly mark it with a dot to be erased later. If you do not know an answer, skip it and go on. Remember to return to this section.

**Multiple Choice-** Read the entire question. Look for the warning words "sometimes, all, never, and not". Eliminate two choices that will not work. Reread the question and read the two choices. Make a decision about which choice is better. If in doubt, put a light question mark by the number and move on.

**True/False-** Read the entire question. Look for words such as "all, every, always, and never". The entire statement must be true. If it is, mark it "true". If any portion is not true, then it must be marked "false".

**Fill in the Blank-** The questions with the blank toward the end are to be answered first. Then look for the middle and then at the beginning.

**Essay Questions-** The essay question is your topic sentence. Before you start writing, look at the ideas you have jotted down. Then sketch an outline with key words for each main point, using the previously written ideas if they fit. Then begin your essay. Use the correct vocabulary. Don't "dummy down" your response because you think you are a poor speller.

**During the Final Lap...** Go back over the entire test and fill in any part you have missed. Guess at this point. If the question confuses you, ask the teacher for help. If the teacher is not available, or won't offer to explain, consider, "If you mean this..., then my answer is this... If you mean..., then my answer is this...".

**Another Big Hint:** Don't be the first person to hand in the test. The class isn't going to do anything during the allotted time, so use your time wisely.

**When You Get Your Test Back...** Check the teacher's math. If there is a math error, at the end of the hour quietly, and with a sincere voice say, "I think there is a math error on my test; this is the point total I added; will you check it again?" Write the correct answers on the test for any answers you answered incorrectly. For essays, ask the teacher for any pointers they have that could improve your responses next time.



Expectation 2: Communication: C. Writing—the process of expressing ideas through writing in a variety of forms, using standard language conventions and considering various audiences

| Criteria          | 4 (Exemplary)  | 3 (Proficient)   | 2 (Needs Improvement)   | 1 (Unacceptable)  |
|-------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Purpose           | Consistently demonstrates a clear and thorough understanding of main ideas and maintains focus through the use of a well-structured thesis. Demonstrates a keen awareness of audience                    | Regularly demonstrates a clear understanding of main ideas and maintains focus through the use of a well-structured thesis. Demonstrates awareness of audience                                 | Sometimes demonstrates an understanding of main ideas; maintains limited focus through the use of a thesis. Demonstrates some awareness of audience                         | Rarely or never demonstrates an understanding of main ideas and is poorly focused, with little or no awareness of audience                              |
| Organization      | Consistently uses organization to clearly and effectively develop ideas. Effectively uses smooth and logical transitions allowing for insightful observations  | Regularly uses organization to clearly and effectively develop ideas. Adequately uses logical transitions allowing for appropriate observations  | Sometimes uses organization to develop ideas. Uses limited transitions allowing for some observations   | Rarely or never uses organization to develop ideas. Uses few transitions and makes few or no observations   |
| Content Accuracy  | Consistently incorporates well-supported, well-developed, relevant evidence; evidence supports the main ideas of the text, resulting in a compelling analysis  | Regularly incorporates developed, relevant evidence; evidence supports the main ideas of the text, resulting in an effective analysis  | Sometimes incorporates evidence which supports the main ideas of the text, resulting in a limited analysis  | Rarely or never incorporates evidence which supports the main ideas of the text, resulting in a faulty analysis or no analysis                          |
| Style/ Expression | Consistently creates well-structured sentences, showing variety, originality, and highly effective use of language. Demonstrates exceptional word choice and vocabulary appropriate to form and audience | Regularly creates well-structured sentences, showing variety, originality, and effective use of language. Demonstrates appropriate word choice and vocabulary appropriate to form and audience | Sometimes creates sentences showing variety and originality with some effective use of language. Word choice and vocabulary are sometimes appropriate for form and audience | Rarely or never creates sentences showing effective use of language. Word choice and vocabulary demonstrate limited or no awareness of form or audience |
| Conventions       | Demonstrates excellence in spelling, mechanics, usage, and grammar   | Demonstrates appropriate spelling, usage, mechanics, and grammar   | Makes some errors in spelling, usage, mechanics, and grammar  | Makes considerable errors in spelling, usage, mechanics, and grammar  |