Test Taking

PREPARATION
The cardinal rule is **RECITE**! This method is more effective than simply re-reading the material. Say aloud from memory the main concepts, supporting facts, etc. that you think are important. If you can’t do it from memory when studying, you won’t be able to do it on the test.

Study as though for an essay test. Research indicates that this procedures will give you higher scores whether you are taking an essay or objective (multiple-choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blank, etc.) test. In other words, look at both the “forest” (main ideas, general concepts) and the “trees” (important facts, illustrations, supporting evidence) so that you can intelligently discuss the main issues.

TAKING EXAMS (in general)
Don’t let tests frighten you. They are just evaluation of your work. If you do a good job of studying, you should be able to handle a reasonable test. Do the easier questions or problems first. This approach gives you a chance to loosen up. Budget your time so that you don’t spend too much time on one part at the expense of another.

OBJECTIVE EXAMS (multiple-choice, true-false, etc.)
If you have a good reason to do so, change an answer. Research indicates that more answers are changed from wrong to right than from right to wrong. Check your own record when you get a test back! Answer all items, even when there is a guessing penalty. In the long run, you come out ahead. Don’t read too much into a question.

ESSAY EXAMS
Be sure you know what is being asked. For example, do you know the difference between “evaluating” and “describing” something? Between “comparing” and “contrasting”?

Always try to support your general statements with specific examples, facts, illustrations, and evidence. This step can mean the difference between a good and a poor paper. **Convince** the reader that you know the subject.

Write neatly! Research indicates that sloppy writing can mean the difference of one whole letter grade or more.

TEST ANXIETY
Most of us feel nervous before or during a test, at least until we see that we can handle the questions. Some of us get so panicky that our performance on the test suffers. For this problem the suggestions mentioned above may help. You can also incorporate some relaxation techniques into your studying and day-of exam routine. Want more suggestions? Come and see an academic skills coach in Student Academic Success Services if test anxiety is a concern of yours.