

Test Your Best:

Techniques to help ensure that your grade will reflect your knowledge

Pre-test

- Learn as much as you can about the professor's method of testing.
 - Ask him/her what to expect.
 - Check his/her old tests.
 - Talk to students who have already taken the course.
- While you study, look for and document the connection of concepts.
- Learn some quick relaxation techniques and practice taking control of your mental state.
- Know what you can bring to the test and assemble all the materials that are allowed. Students have been known to show up for an open book test without their book. Also, nothing can cause you to self-destruct like discovering burned out batteries in your calculator just as you begin your calculus test.
- Prepare your reference materials. Tab the pages of those textbooks that you may be using for open book tests; it will speed up your reference time. If you are allowed a "cheat sheet" be sure it is well organized.
- Get a good night's sleep before a big test. If you stay up most of the night studying you probably won't remember much of the material come test time.
- Arrive at the test site early enough to get a "good" seat but not so early that you have time to pace the hall and worry. Also, figure out what a "good" seat is for you. Some students feel that they concentrate better if they are in the back of the room while others prefer a front row seat. Some students are more comfortable near a window while others consider windows too much of a distraction. This is a small point but it's an important one.
- If you are the type of person who gets confused upon hearing conflicting information, it's probably advisable that you not talk about the test with classmates just prior to taking it.

During the Test

- Using the relaxation techniques you have practiced, take 20-30 seconds to calm yourself and focus.
- As soon as you get the test paper, write down key words and formulas that you might need later and may otherwise forget.
- There are two different approaches to taking tests. You can begin by reading the entire exam so that you know exactly what is being asked and approximately how long the test will take. The other method involves scanning the test just to get an idea of the length. The second approach is helpful if you're the type of person who gets anxious upon seeing a question or two that you don't know how to answer...so anxious that you have difficulty concentrating on answering the questions you do know. You're better off in that case not knowing what is ahead.
- Read the directions carefully and circle key words.
- Pace yourself. Don't allow yourself to get hung up on one question. If the solution doesn't come to mind within a few minutes, go on and come back to the problem later.
- If possible, estimate your answer before working the problem completely. The estimate can serve as a check once you've solved the problem.
- A blank is a sure zero; give whatever information you can.
- Don't assume that there are "trick" questions but do be aware.
- If you need some clarification ask questions of the professor or proctor. If they don't want to answer, they won't. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
- Upon completion review and recheck your answers.

Post-Test

- Pay special attention to the things you got wrong on the test.
- Check your method of test taking. Should you change anything?
- Always look for ways to improve your study habits.
- If you continue to experience problems with tests, maybe your study skills are failing you, or perhaps other problems are interfering with your ability to concentrate and perform. Check it out at Student Development and Academic Services.