Studying for Exams: Top Test Tips

Daily Review is Essential
Studying for an exam should not begin shortly before the test—it should begin the first day of class. The average adult loses 60-80% of new information within 24 hours of learning it without review. Review your material for 5-10 minutes a day to ensure you know all of your material when it's time for the exam.

Finding Out What’s on the Test
Talk to your professor or TA and find out how many questions will be on the test, what types of questions they will be, and how many points each section is worth. This can help you to guide your study time. For example, if you have a 50 point test with multiple choice questions worth 20 points and essay questions worth 30 points, you will want to spend more time studying the content that will be on the essay questions.

Answer Easy Questions First
Have you ever taken a test and found that you didn’t know several questions in a row and the further you went on the test, the more discouraged you got? This is a common occurrence for students. Instead of going in order, if you read a question and don’t know it, just skip it! When you answer the questions you know first, you will begin to build confidence and momentum, making those difficult questions more achievable.

Write Down Memory Prompts
There is no rule against writing down important information on the back of a test. If you have memorized several different definitions, formulas, and concepts while you’re studying, trying to keep all that information memorized and doing well on the test can be difficult. Try flipping your paper over when the test begins and write them all down.

Multiple Choice
There are a few different strategies for approaching multiple choice questions
- **Answer questions mentally:** Cover the answer choices with your hand and then read the question. Once you’ve got the answer in your head, remove your hand and find the answer choice that best fits your mental answer
- **Eliminate wrong answers:** Instead of looking for the right answer, looking for the wrong answers first can often be helpful.
- **Opposites:** If two answer choices are directly opposing one another, one is likely to be correct

True/False
Here are some tips for true/false questions:
- **Don’t look for patterns:** If you’ve answered seven false answers in a row, that doesn’t mean the eighth question is true! Professors don’t spend time making sure the answers are in a pattern, so neither should you.
- **Look for exceptions:** For a statement to be true, it must be true in every single situation. However, for a statement to be false, it only has to be false in one situation. Therefore, try to look for exceptions to the statement, or prove it false, before selecting your answer.

Conditional and Unconditional Words
For both multiple choice and true/false questions, looking at words in the question can be helpful. A question that uses unconditional words (never, always, every, etc.) is much different than one that uses conditional words (usually, sometimes, generally, etc.). For example, “It is always hot in California” versus “It is often hot in California” would be likely to have different answers.

For more information, check out our study skills workshops at aae.boisestate.edu/workshops/