Seattle Central Community College
Student Academic Assistance

TRiO
Room 1102B1
Tel. (206) 587-3852
www.seattlecentral.org/academic-assistance

HOURS
Daily 8:00 – 4:30

COUNSELING HOURS
Daily 8:00 – 4:00
Evening Counseling
Tuesdays 4:00 – 6:00
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Booklets
Managing Your Time… Study… Work… Play
Using the Parts of a Text
Guide to Writing a Term Paper
How to Take Tests
Different Kinds of Tests
How to Take Lecture Notes
How to Write a Term Paper
SQ4R: How to Read Faster and Remember More
How to Give An Oral Report
How to Read a Textbook
How to Read a Math Textbook

Live Workshops
Take Great Notes
Write a Great Essay
Managing Stress
Improve Your Memory
Building Self-Esteem
Managing Your Time

…and more!

Visit our website for a current schedule of our workshops
www.seattlecentral.org/academic-assistance
Test-Taking Strategies

Tests are an unavoidable part of the college experience. How you study for a test depends on whether the test is multiple choice, essay, or a combination. This booklet will help you in understanding the different test styles as well as provide you with practical tips for performing well academically.

Before the Test

- Identify which concepts and information are likely to be included on the test.
- Determine the textbook chapters and/or pages that will be covered on the exam so that you know which items to read and review.
- Review your notes and old exams and quizzes.
- Join a study group.
- Decide if there are lectures that you missed, that are incomplete, or notes that need re-doing.
- Practice discussing key concepts in your own writing or in your own words. Which do you feel confident in discussing? Which do you feel you need to review?

Test Anxiety

What is it?
Test Anxiety or "anticipatory anxiety" is a feeling of agitation and distress. It is natural and helps to keep you mentally and physically alert, but too much may cause physical distress, emotional upset, and concentration difficulties. Anxiety occurs in a wave, so it will increase from the time you first recognize it, come to a peak, and then naturally subside.

What does it feel like?
Physical symptoms may include rapid heartbeat, muscle tension, queasiness, dry mouth, or perspiration. Behavioral symptoms may include the inability to act, make decisions, to express yourself, or to deal with everyday situations. As a result, you might have difficulty (a) reading and understanding questions, (b) organizing thoughts, or (c) retrieving key words and concepts. You might also experience mental blocking, which means going blank on questions an possible remembering the correct answers as soon as the exam is over. Psychological reactions may include feelings of apprehension, uneasiness, upset, and self-doubt.

How can you reduce test anxiety?
Allow yourself plenty of time to accomplish all the things you have to do before the test. Build up confidence by reviewing the material frequently. Set up your study goals and take one step at a time to not overwhelm yourself. If you feel the anxiety increasing, there are several types of exercises which can help you get through this period. Please see a SCCC counselor for further assistance. You may also wish to consider attending an SAA workshop or registering for an HDC class to help you out.

Online Resources

Queendom: The Land of Tests
www.queendom.com

Practice Tests
http://ccc.byu.edu/learning/practice.php

Test-Taking Strategies
www.suite101.com/reference/test_taking_strategies

Test-Taking Strategies
http://ccc.byu.edu/learning/strategy.php

Overcoming Test Anxiety
www.studygs.net/tstprp8.htm

Test-Taking Resources
www.usu.edu/arc/idea_sheets/

Taking Objective Tests
www.und.edu/dept/ULC/ASEPKt/objtests.html

Answering Essay Questions
www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/writing/answering

Study Tips for Midterms and Finals
http://collegeuniversity.suite101.com/article.cfm/study_tips_for_final_exams

Virtual Pamphlet: Test-Taking
http://counseling.uchicago.edu/resources/virtualpamphlets/test_taking.shtml
Day of Test

- As you anticipate the exam, think positively, e.g., "I can do OK on this exam. I've studied and I know my stuff."
- Engage in "thought stopping" if you find that you are worrying a lot, comparing yourself to your peers, or thinking about what others may say about your performance on this exam.
- Before you go to bed on the night before the exam, organize anything that you will need for the exam -- pen, pencil, ruler, eraser, calculator, etc. Double check the time of the exam and the location.
- Get to the exam on time - not too late but not too early.
- Be cautious about talking to other students about the exam material just before going into the exam, especially if this will make you more anxious.
- Sit in a location in the exam room where you will be distracted as little as possible.
- Make sure to carefully read any instructions on the exam.
- As you work on the exam, focus only on the exam, not on what other students are doing or on thinking about past exams or future goals.
- If you feel very anxious in the exam, take a few minutes to calm yourself. Stretch your arms and legs and then relax them again. Do this a couple of times. Take a few slow deep breaths.
- USE TEST TIME WISELY! Look over the test and set up a schedule. Determine how long you will spend on each question and stick to it.
- If the exam is more difficult than you anticipated, try to focus and just do your best. It might be enough to get you through with a reasonable grade!
- When the exam is over, treat yourself. If you don't have any other commitments, maybe you can take the night off.

Techniques

- Data Dump: Right away, turn your exam over and take 2-3 minutes writing down formulas or concepts that will help you during the test)
- Preview Test: Look over all the questions so you know what to expect
- 2nd Data Dump: Expand formulas/concepts and add other things you remember
- Test Progress Schedule: Find out the best way to get the most points in the least amount of time
- Answer Easy Questions: A good way to help you get the most points upfront and save more time for challenging questions

Test-Techniques: TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

- Pay attention to qualifying words (e.g., always, never).
- The answer is false if any part is false.
- Do not look for patterns.
- Guess if you don't know.
- Stick with your first answer unless you are sure you are wrong.
- Read the question to see if it makes sense as it stands.
- Pick out key words; know their meanings/definitions.
- Watch for qualifying words: not, all, none, never, almost, probably, always.
- Make sure there is not contradictory information in the question.
- Think of reasons why the statement would be true or false.
- Think about whether the statement is always true; if there is an exception, then it is probably false.

Test-Techniques: PROBLEM-SOLVING QUESTIONS

- Read the question.
- Re-read getting important information.
- If there is a multiple option, estimate your answer.
- Work backwards (e.g., 2 + 3 = 5, 5 - 2 = 3)
- Watch for careless errors.

After the Test

One way to further your learning is to follow up with your instructor after the exam. This may help shed some light on incorrect responses. You may also make an appointment with a tutor to go over your test and learn any new material that was not clear the first time.

Whether you did well or not, be sure to follow through on the reward you promised yourself - and enjoy it! Try not to dwell on all the mistakes you might have made. Do not immediately begin studying for the next test. . . indulge in something relaxing for a little while.
Test-Techniques: MATCHING QUESTIONS

- Matching is an exercise in recalling memorized information. The tests are divided into two columns. Items on the left side are usually matched with responses on the right side.
- Ask if you can use alternatives more than once.
- Do not match if you are not sure.
- Take each entry in turn in the left column and try to think of the answer before reading the choices.
- Choose the best answer and mark the answer sheet according to the directions.
- Narrow down the field, by completing those answers you know are correct.
- Avoid changing answers.

Test-Techniques: FILL-IN-THE-BLANK QUESTIONS

- This test item also requires recalling specific types of information. Unlike the multiple choice matching question, you must supply the appropriate word or number to complete the entry.
- Look for clues (e.g., grammar, tenses).
- Use common sense.
- Choose the best word.
- Pay attention to the length of line give or to the number of lines.
- Read through after you answer to make sure it sounds right.

Test-Techniques: SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- Pay attention to grammar.
- Answer within the context of the course.
- Use terms the instructor used.
- If you are having a problem, answer by giving an example.
- Beef up your answers if you have time.

Test-Techniques: ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Essay questions are analytical in nature. Your instructor is interested in determining how well you relate course material and class discussion to the particular question under consideration.
  - Read directions carefully (i.e., Do you have to answer every question of just three out of five?).
  - As soon as you get the exam, use the back of the question sheet (or a sheet of scratch paper) to write down facts and details that you have memorized, but are afraid you might forget. Only spend a minute or two on this.
  - After seeing how many questions you need to answer, quickly plan how much time you will spend on each question.
- Do not spend too much time on any one question. If you find you do not have enough time to write a full essay, at least write an outline of your main points to show what you did know.
- Put your best ideas in the first few lines or paragraphs of your answer. Do not save these for a "big finish" because you may run out of time, or forget to work these in to your answer.
- End your essay with one or two sentences that summarize the main points.
- Re-read questions. Pay attention and know the meaning of key words (e.g., explain, contrast, compare).
- Outline your answer. Include an introduction, middle, and conclusion to your essay. Include details.
- Be general when you aren’t sure of the exact detail (e.g., It is better to write “late fourteen hundreds” rather than 1493 if the true date is 1492).
Pay attention to grammar.

Answer within the context of the course. Use terms the instructor used.

If you are having a problem, answer by giving an example.

**Common Words Used in Essay Questions**

**Compare** – Look for qualities or characteristics that resemble each other. Emphasize similarities among them but in some cases also mention differences.

**Contrast** – When you are instructed to contrast, you should stress dissimilarities, differences, or unlikeliness of associated things, qualities, events or problems.

**Criticize** – In a criticism you should express your judgment with respect to the correctness or merit of the factors under consideration. You are expected to give the results of your own analysis and to discuss both limitations and good points.

**Describe** – Recount, characterize, sketch, or relate in sequence or story form.

**Define** – Definitions call for concise, clear, authoritative meanings. In such statements, details are seldom required, but boundaries or limitations of the definitions should be briefly cited. You must keep in mind the subject to which the item being defined belongs, and whatever differentiates it in this particular class from all other classes.

**Diagram** – Give a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic answer. Usually you should label a diagram. In some cases, add a brief explanation or description.

**Discuss** – The term discuss, which appears often in essay questions, directs you to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations pro and con regarding the problems or items involved. This type of question calls for a complete and detailed answer.

**Explain** – Clarify, interpret, and spell out the material you present. Give reasons for differences of opinion or of results, and try to analyze causes.

**Illustrate** – Use a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example to explain or clarify a problem.

**State** – In questions which direct you to specify, give state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear language.

**Summarize** – When you are asked to summarize or present a summary, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustration, and elaboration are to be omitted.

**Test-Techniques: MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

- Read ALL of the multiple choice options in their entirety before choosing an answer. Avoid the temptation to mark the first option that looks good.
- Think of a correct answer, then look for it among the alternatives.
- Eliminate the ones that are obviously wrong.
- Narrow your choice to two, then compare them to see how they differ.
- If you cannot select the correct answer after several seconds of thought, cross out any options that you are sure are wrong, put a mark next to the question, and move on to the next question. The goal is to do all the relatively easy questions first, then come back later to the difficult ones. But don't rush. Be sure to give each question some thought before moving on.
- When you have gone through the entire test once, go back to the items you have marked. This time concentrate on eliminating as many options as you can.
- Be wary of options that include extreme words, such as "always," "never," "all," "best," "worst," "none." (If you have to guess, it's usually best to eliminate options with extreme words).
- Pay close attention to words such as "not" or "except." (e.g., "Which of the following is not true about the Civil War?"). Circle words like "not" and "except" whenever you see them, to make them stand out. (Usually these words are a signal that all of the options are true except one, and your task is to pick out the FALSE option).