

# Survival Strategies for Taking Tests

## Before you Begin:

1. Preview the test first. This gets you thinking about the material.
2. Do a mind dump. Make notes of anything you think you might forget. Write down things that you used in learning the material that might help you remember.
3. Calculate the time you should allow for each section according to the point value. (You don't want to spend 30 minutes on a question that counts for only 15 marks.)

## Taking a Test:

4. Read the directions. Never assume that you know what the directions say.
5. Answer the easy questions first. This will give you the confidence and momentum to get through the rest of the test. You are sure these answers are correct.
6. Go back to the difficult questions. While doing the easy questions, your subconscious will have been working on the answers to the harder ones. Also, later items on the test might give you useful or needed information for earlier items.
7. Answer all questions.
8. Ask the instructor to explain any items that are not clear.
9. Circle key words in difficult questions. This forces you to focus on central points.
10. Express difficult questions in your own words. Rephrasing can make it clear to you, but be sure you don't change the meaning of the question.
11. Use all of the time allotted for the test.

**Always have  
a watch!**

## **ANSWERING ESSAY QUESTIONS**

1. Make notes on back of exam sheet, eg., ACRONYMS.
2. Read directions carefully. Should you answer all questions? Do you have choice?
3. Survey all questions before answering and note worth of each question. Notice much time should you give each question?
4. Mark key question words such as "Compare" or "Discuss" or "Contrast" or "List."
5. Start with the easiest questions to gain confidence.
6. Before you answer, make sure you understand the question -- ASK the teacher or instructor if you are unsure.
7. When beginning to answer a question, jot down any additional points and number your points and ideas in the order that you will use them.
8. Your attitude when writing should be that this paper is targeted at someone who is virtually ignorant of your topic and thus you should explain everything that falls outside the realm of "common knowledge." Explain Everything!
9. Use facts and logic, not your feelings; exams test your understanding of a subject.
10. Answer the question directly and forcefully in the first sentence and, very importantly, include some of the words in the question to keep you focused.
11. Include only one main idea per paragraph -- state your important idea clearly and precisely, and then follow this statement with supporting facts or logical evidence.

## With multi-paragraph answers:

- 1) Don't save the best until last;
- 2) End with a summarising statement or two!
- 3) Be as neat as possible -- it might mean a higher Grade.
- 4) Write on only one side of the sheet and leave a generous margin. Paper is plentiful!
- 5) Double space to make later editing easier.