

Before You Hand in the Test:

As obvious as it seems, it makes good sense for a student to re-read the directions to be sure they have answered the appropriate number of questions and have done so in the correct way. A student should check to make sure each item is clearly numbered and labeled. If time allows, it makes sense to re-organize and re-write any essays as neatly as possible.

ESSAY TEST STRATEGIES

Read the directions carefully at least two or three times. It is not uncommon for a student to lose points because they did not answer exactly the right question or they left out a part of the answer (e.g., putting the definition, but forgetting the example; putting the causes, but forgetting to put the effects).

Don't forget to put in the basic material (e.g., definitions, descriptions, examples), even though it seems obvious. The instructor usually wants to see that a student has clearly understood this material. Again, a student should consider asking the instructor if they are not certain whether this material should be included. In general, more detail is better than less.

If a student is running out of time, it can be worthwhile to simply jot down anything they can - an outline, key words and phrases, etc. Most instructors are looking for anything they can find so they can see a student has some understanding of the material and can give partial credit.

Consider the following essay answer strategy:

1. Read the question, mark the key words, and read it again.
2. Brainstorm information for the answer. Jot down the information on scrap paper.
3. Re-read the question to make sure you are on track.
4. Condense and organize the brainstormed information. Put similar items together and order the information.
5. Write the essay. Immediately jot down on scrap paper any new information that comes to mind while writing.
6. Re-read the question to make sure you have answered all parts completely.
7. Proofread the essay checking for complete sentences, spelling, punctuation, etc.
8. If time allows, re-write the essay as neatly as possible.

MULTIPLE CHOICE TEST STRATEGIES

Consider reading the stem (question part) twice. If a student can mark on the test paper, it can be valuable to read the stem once, go back to mark the key terms, and then re-read the stem a second time. Key terms include negative words (not, except, etc.) and direction words (example, definition, causes, etc.). Covering up the choices (answers) when reading the stem helps many students stay focused. A student can also try to answer the question from their memory and then compare that to the choices given. If a student uncovers the choices one at a time, they may find it less confusing and more likely they will consider all the possibilities. Cross off or mark ("X" to cross off, T for "true", F for "false", ? for "maybe") each choice as you go along. Doing this keeps a student more involved and, therefore, less distracted. An effective strategy is to circle the number of any question a student wants to come back to. The issue of changing answers comes up often. As obvious as it seems, it not advisable to change answers without a rationale. To clarify, don't change an answer just because you now think "C" is a better answer than "D". Ask yourself: "Why do I like "C" better than "D" now?" If you can give a logical answer, then make the change. Otherwise, leave your original choice and move on.