

Lesson Plan for Test Taking

Goals:

- Students will become aware of strategies for studying for tests.
- Students will understand how to take tests.
- Students will learn concentration and memory strategies.

Materials Needed:

Copies of the "Test Taking Tips." (1 for each student)

Procedure:

Step #1

Discuss test taking strategies.

Ask students...

What do you do to study?

Answers should include: place to study, time to study, reviewing often, review after each class, taking good notes, etc.

How do you take tests?

Answers should include: read directions, answer questions that they know, review answers, answer high point questions, etc.

Step #2

Study Strategies

Before the Test...

- Find out ahead of time what material the test covers, what type of test it will be, how the test will be graded and how much the test will count towards your final grade
- Study in a place that is free of distractions and have all your materials ready to use.
- Study at a time when you are alert and not hungry or sleepy.
- Don't wait until the last minute to study! Short daily study sessions are better than one long session the night before the test.
- Set a goal for each study period. If you are being tested on three chapters, set up four study sessions, one for each chapter and one for a review of the main ideas in all three chapters.
- Repetition is key! Read and reread your class notes and the relevant chapters in the textbook.
- Take good notes!
- Organize your notes according to what will be on the test.
- While you are reviewing your notes, cover them up periodically and summarize them out loud. Pretend that you are explaining the material to someone else.
- Create your own study aids
 - Make an outline from your notes of just the main ideas.
 - Make a timeline of important dates or the order of events.
 - Make flashcards for studying vocabulary or events and important dates.
 - Make up your own quiz or test based on your notes and have a friend, parent or sibling test you.
- Do any practice exams or study sheets provided by the teacher. These will help you focus your study session and give you confidence.
- Get help from the teacher if you do not understand something.
- Finish studying the day before the exam.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Eat breakfast.
- Be on time to school.
- Avoid stressful situations prior to the test.

Studying in a Group...

- It often works best to have just three to five people in a study group. That way, each person gets the time to talk and make sure they understand the material.
- Schedule a few study sessions. Whether studying alone in a group, a few short sessions are much more useful than one long “cram” session.
- Having one person act as the leader can help a group to run smoothly. The main goal of the leader is to keep everyone focused on studying so that things don’t become too social.
- Be prepared! A study group is a place to share your understanding of a subject. The other people in the group aren’t there to teach you facts you should already know. The more you can offer the group, the more you’ll get out of it.
- Creating and sticking to an agenda is important!
 - First, compare your notes and review old homework. If there is something you have had trouble understanding, write down your questions about it before meeting with your study group.
 - Next, drill each other on facts you need to memorize.
 - Lastly, take the time to discuss “why” questions. One way to handle “why” questions is to make a list of important ones you will want to review. Then divide the questions among the group. At your next meeting, have each person present a lesson about their questions.

During the Test...

- Listen to and read instructions carefully -- make sure you understand them.
- If you have a question, ask it.
- Answer questions completely and with detail.
- Check to sure you have not skipped anything and proofread your answers.
- Do not let other test takers distract you -- it makes no difference who finishes first or last.
- If you finish early, go back and proof your answers again. But don’t change anything unless you are sure. Studies show that the first answer you choose is usually the right one.

After the Test...

- When the test is returned, read the teacher’s comments carefully and try to learn from your mistakes.
- Save tests for later review for end-of-term tests.

If you must cram...

- Begin with 5 sheets of paper:
 - Identify 5 key concepts or topics that will be covered on the test.
 - Enter one at the top of each page.
 - Use only key words or short phrases.
 - In your own words, write an explanation, definition, answer, etc. on each page. Do not use your text or notes!
 - Compare your response to your text or class notes.
 - Edit or re-write your understanding of each topic.
- Add topics if you have time and follow the same sequence.

DETER - Test Taking Strategy

D = Directions

- Read the test directions very carefully.
- Ask your teacher to explain anything about the test directions you do not understand.
- Only by following the directions can you achieve a good score on the test.
- If you do not follow the directions, you will not be able to demonstrate what you know.

E = Examine

- Examine the entire test to see how much you have to do.

- Only by knowing the entire task can you break it down into parts that become manageable for you.

T = Time

- Once you have examined the entire test, decide how much time you will spend on each item.
- If there are different points for items, plan to spend the most time on the items that count for the most points.
- Planning your time is especially important for essay tests where you must avoid spending so much time on one item that you have little time left for other test items.

E = Easiest

- Answer the items you find easiest first.
- If you get stuck on a difficult time that comes up early in the test, you may not get to answer items that tests things you know.

R = Review

- If you have planned your time correctly, you will have time to review your answers and make them as complete and accurate as possible.
- Also make sure to review the test directions to be certain you have answered all items required.

Step #3

Concentration and Memory Skills

Take some time to go through ways to create concentration and memory skills by discussing the following information. This information is in “educationese” and needs to be interpreted for your students, but the information will help them realize that they can change how they remember things.

Making an Effort to Remember

- Interest - The brain prioritizes by meaning, value and relevance. To have meaning, you must understand what you are learning. IN order to remember something thoroughly, you must be interested in it and think that it has value and relevance in your life.
- Intent to Remember - Your attitude has much to do with whether you remember something or not. A key factor to remembering is having a positive attitude that you get it right the first time. Attention is no the same as learning, but little learning takes place without attention.
- Basic Background - Your understanding of new materials depends on what you already know that you can connect it to. The more you increase your basic knowledge, the easier it is to build new knowledge on this background.

Controlling the Amount and Form

- Selectivity - You must determine what is most important and select those parts to begin the process of studying and learning.
- Meaningful Organization - You can learn and remember better if you can group ideas into some sort of meaningful categories or groups.

Strengthening Neural Connections

- Recitation - Saying ideas aloud in your own words strengthens synaptic connections and gives you immediate feedback. The more feedback you get, the faster and more accurate your learning.
- Visualization - The brain’s quickest and probably the longest-lasting response is to images. By making a mental picture, you use an entirely different part of the brain than you did by reading or listening.
- Association - Memory is increased when facts to be learned are consciously associated with something familiar to you. Memory is essentially formed by making neural connections. Begin by asking, “what is this like that I already know and understand?”

Allowing Time to Solidify Pathways

- Consolidation - Your brain must have time for new information to establish and solidify a neuronal pathway. When you make a list or review your notes right after class, you are using the principle of consolidation.
- Distributed Practice - A series of shorter study sessions distributed over several days is preferable to fewer but longer study sessions.

Reflection Questions:

How can you practice some of the skills you learned here? How will this change your study habits?

(Teachers: Please feel free to add to or change the reflection questions.)

Test Taking Tips

- ❖ Read the instructions carefully. Never assume you will know what they will say. Ask the teacher if you are unsure about anything.
- ❖ Read the entire test through before starting. Notice the point value of each section. This will help you to pace yourself.
- ❖ Answer the easiest questions first, then the ones with the highest point value. You don't want to spend 20 minutes trying to figure out a low point problem.
- ❖ Keep busy! If you get stuck on a question, come back to it later. The answer might come to you while you are working on another part of the test.
- ❖ If you aren't sure how to answer a question fully, try to answer at least part of it. You might get partial credit.
- ❖ Need to guess on a multiple-choice test? First, eliminate the answers that you know are wrong. Then take a guess. Because your first guess is most likely correct, you shouldn't go back and change an answer later unless you are certain you were wrong.
- ❖ On an essay test, take a moment to plan your writing. First, jot down the important points you want to make. Then number these points in the order you will cover them.
- ❖ Keep it neat. If your teacher can't read your writing, you might lose points.
- ❖ Don't waste time doing things for which you will not receive credit, such as rewriting questions.
- ❖ Leave time at the end to look over your work. Did you answer every question? Did you proofread for errors? It is easy to make careless mistakes while taking a test.

A Dozen Ways to Study Smarter in Less Time

- ✓ Understand each teacher's grading system: what counts - how much does homework count, daily quizzes, projects, tests, etc.
- ✓ Keep all assignments, handouts, tests, etc.
- ✓ Always use study time given in class!
- ✓ Create and use your study blocks.
- ✓ Study at the same time and the same place daily.
- ✓ Ask for help as soon as you realize you don't understand.
- ✓ Process information each day - don't wait until right before the test.
- ✓ Make flash cards of things you think will be on the test as soon as you come to them in class or homework.
- ✓ Form a study group.
- ✓ Take notes and keep them organized and labeled.
- ✓ Do your best on every assignment.