

stages to successful test taking

taking tests and memory

Make It Happen:

time management

concentration

reading

listening

memory

taking tests

writing papers

self-regulation

learning styles

motivation

Three separate places along the test-taking journey can impact your success or failure on a test: **intake**, **review**, and **test recall**.

Intake

Test preparation starts not the night before the test when you're pulling out your book—and not even the week before the test when you start creating outlines and note cards. Test preparation begins the moment you step into class, take your first set of notes, or read the first section in your textbook. At your first encounter with new material, you are engaging in preliminary activities that will shape your exam preparation. This involves:

- Listening to lectures
- Reading textbooks
- Note-taking in lectures and from books
- Asking questions to clarify
- Summarizing lab results
- Obtaining PowerPoint slides

It's only possible to have a clear understanding of material for a test if you get a clear understanding of the material when you hear it, read it, or take notes.

Review

Active study strategies move information from short-term memory to long-term memory. Re-reading your text and notes isn't enough; you've got to actively engage with the information in order to process it thoroughly and deeply.

“Active” means putting ideas into your own language and organizational structure—create something by speaking, writing, or creating a visual representation of material.

Active review is the trademark of a successful learner and test-taker. Review for short periods of time repeatedly to get the most out of your study time.

Intrigued by how memory works? Want to learn more about making studying active? The Center for Learning has more resources on memory, active review, and other learning essentials.

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Review: What's on the test?

What chapters or topics do you need to study, and how do you determine the most important information? These questions will guide you as you review material and predict test questions.

- ❓ What is emphasized on the syllabus? (ie: what topics do your other assignments cover?)
- ❓ What are the goals and objectives for the class?
- ❓ What does the professor emphasize in class?
- ❓ What does the book or the professor devote the most time to?
- ❓ What's on the study guide? If there is no study guide, can you create your own from the ideas emphasized in class?
- ❓ What material does the professor write on the board, repeat, or point your attention toward in the book?
- ❓ What are the questions your professor spends the most class time answering?

Recall

During the test, these tips will help you stay calm and focused.

- Get a good night sleep, and be sure to eat before the test.
- Try to stay calm. Take deep breaths and use positive self-talk: "I know the material really well." "I feel confident." And "I am going to take my time and think carefully."
- Take something familiar with you into the exam—a favorite pen, a comfortable sweater—anything that relaxes you and that has been with you as you studied.
- Notice the number of points assigned to each section. Take a look at point distribution to determine how to best spend your time. Pencil in times to begin each section. For example, if the essay is worth 50% of the test grade, plan to spend 50% of your time working on the essay.
- Read the directions carefully for each section.
- Read each question carefully. Underline key words.
- Let the test help you. As you're working through the test, skip answers you can't recall and keep working. You may find a word you're looking for later in the test or be able to use other test questions to help you.
- If you have time, review your answers.

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