

# Secrets of Success on Tests!

Want better test results? Try these strategies when you study:

## 1. Know what's on the test.

- Compare your study notes with a friend's. Have you missed something?
- Make sure you catch up on missed work - don't let missed work slide.
- What did you spend the most time on in class? This should be a major part of the test
- What's the theme of our unit? Are there one or two key concepts your teacher has stressed?
- Compare ideas with another student. What does each of you think will be important on the test?

## 2. Get ready for the type of questions you will see on the test.

- What sorts of questions does your teacher favour. Different types of questions call for different strategies.
- Try to get a clue. Ask your teacher for help in a subtle way and see if you can get a hint for the test.
- Make up sample test questions that are similar to the type on the real test.
- Identify likely topics for multiple choice, definitions, 3 to 6 mark sentence answers, applying skills questions ( like case studies ), and essay style questions.

## 3. Know what sort of learner you are and use a study method based on your strongest memory type.

<b>Visual</b>	Needs symbols, objects, pictures to visualize. Draw simple pictures or symbols to help you remember details. Try to re-draw your pictures without looking at your original drawings
<b>Oral</b>	Needs to say and hear information. Make lists of key study phrases and quietly say them out loud to yourself. See if you can repeat your list without looking at it - several times in a row.
<b>Verbal</b>	Needs to read and write words. Copy out your flash cards three or four times. See if you can re-write your list from memory, two or three times
<b>Tactile</b>	Needs to associate key study points with actions or touch. Try to relate your key study ideas to something you can act out - as if you were there. Think of what actions or senses relate to your study ideas. Try to repeat your sequence of motions or sensations from memory.

## 4. Create a positive environment for studying.

- Tune the world out when you study. Give what you are doing total attention. NEVER try to study while your mind is on something else. Have a clear head when you want to concentrate. Eliminate distractions.
- Make the place you study a place you have good feelings about. Find something that makes you enjoy being in the room where you study. Don't let your study area become a dungeon. e.g. have a jellybean jar, listen to music there, put up some posters you like
- Don't make studying painful or psychologically harmful. Every day you study, also do something physically and mentally satisfying - sports, music, time with friends, shopping. Make a study day a pleasant day.

## 5. Create an effective study plan.

The whole point of studying is to put key information into your long term memory in a way that you can access it for the test. How long you study and the methods you use are entirely personal. Just as long as they work. If you don't feel that you are studying effectively, it's time to break the pattern! Do it differently! Try some of these methods:

Make sure you know when the test date is. Start your serious studying five days early, but only one or two hours a night. Create a schedule of major study sessions. Don't wait until the day before a test. Spread your study time out.

- Prepare flash cards or 3X5 cards with one key concept on each. Keep these with you throughout the test week - in school, at home, and whenever you have extra time. To put information into your long term memory you need to review it on six separate occasions. Use your flash cards whenever you have five minutes to kill, especially in line ups, or when you have to wait somewhere.
- Try using association. Connect important study points, people, events, with an easy to remember object you can visualize. Think of a connection between the object and the thing you want to remember. Use objects you find interesting e.g. things found around a hockey rink, things you use in your hobbies etc.
- "Surround study" - Study often, in short bursts. The more frequently you study, the more it stays in your mind. Review your notes and make up some flash cards every week. Have "study bursts": five minutes of study anytime or place.

#### **6. Create a good attitude just before you write the test.**

- Set a specific goal for every test or assignment. Keep going after that goal until you achieve it. Write that goal down where you can see it every day. Visualize achieving that goal.
- Get a good sleep on the nights before the test. Tired minds don't work quickly or well!
- Feel successful going into the test. Bring a lucky pen or other good luck item to the test. Dress up a little to make the test a special event, or dress down to feel more comfortable. See which one works for you.

#### **7. Learn from your experiences.**

- How successful was your last test? How can you improve your study plan to avoid problems and maximize success on your next test?

## **Success on Tests - Test Writing Strategies**

Different types of test questions require different strategies for success. Here are three excellent strategies:

### **For Multiple Choice**

- The key here is to read **carefully**. Do not rush. Do not select the first answer that looks more or less correct. Underline key, specific words that can make an answer correct or incorrect.
- Before you select the most correct answer, eliminate the obviously wrong answers first. Then select from the remaining choices.

**Note:** This only works if you have done a good job of key word studying. If you do not know the specific, technical words related to a topic, you won't know which key words to eliminate.

**Exercise:**

- Look through your notes. Make a list of key words that have to do with the topic
- Underline the key words in the question and the answer. E.g. time periods, specific terms or details.
- Eliminate the obviously wrong answers. Select the best remaining answer.

**For Sentence Answer**

The key here is to ***be specific***. Do not waste words. Do not give a vague answer. Provide specific, detailed information only on the specific areas asked for in the question.

**For Major Skills Question**

There are two main types of major questions:

- a) Paragraph answer and essay format
- b) Major skills interpretation

**For Paragraph answer/essay format**

You must plan out your answer in a quick point form plan. You also need to focus in on the specific intellectual task the question calls for. Here are some of the tasks you might be asked to do:

- *Compare and Contrast* . . . Clearly explain what is similar and what is different. Do not just list the details of each side. You must state the clear similarities and differences.
- *Assess the Validity of* . . . Read the quotation or viewpoint expressed in the question. Decide to what extent you think the statement is true. Note down the main points for and against the statement and draw your conclusion. You must state your opinion clearly, and you must provide specific detailed facts to support it.
- *Which achieved more* . . . Do not merely list the accomplishments of each side. Take a stand! You must state your opinion clearly and provide specific facts to support your viewpoint.

Your answer should always follow this format:

- a) Introduction and clear statement of your opinion, along with three or four main reasons.
- b) Main body of the answer. Your specific arguments and points, organized into paragraphs. One main idea per paragraph.
- c) A one paragraph summary/conclusion. You repeat your main points and show how they fit together to prove your point.

What to do when you run out of ideas:

Once you have exhausted all the obvious ideas and facts for your answer, you have to use a lateral thinking technique to go further. Try these:

Think up as many points as you can for the opposite side. Write them down and then argue against them.

- Look at the problem from another viewpoint. E.g. Look at ancient Egypt from the point of view of the Pharaoh, his scribes, soldiers, and priests, an average man, and average woman, a child, a foreigner
- Try to think of something that relates to each of your school subjects - Math, Science, Family Studies, Business, Tech, English, Phys. Ed, Geography and History etc.

Here is a sample essay planning sequence:

- Make a fast point form plan: ( about 2-3 minutes )
  - Consider more than one viewpoint.
  - Decide on your main point of view.
  - Make sure you have enough topics to write about to gain full marks.
- Write your opening paragraph. Be sure you state your viewpoint clearly.
- Fire out your main points, one per paragraph. Provide specific details for each point. (allow one minute per mark )
- Finish with a one paragraph summary/conclusion ( 2-3 minutes )

### **Major Skills Question**

On the test you will likely be given an example, information, or a case study you have never seen before. The key here is to recall when we looked at a similar example or did a similar exercise in class, and try to follow the same thinking process. Use the same step-by-step analysis methods we used in class, and provide enough specific information to gain full marks.

Read the instructions carefully to be sure you do the analysis activity the question asks for.