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POST-TEST ANALYSIS

How to improve your test performance by looking back and looking forward

Just as a detective analyzes evidence and searches a scene for clues, reflecting upon a recent testing experience can yield a wealth of information to help you achieve your goals.

In fact, a returned test is the best possible study guide for the rest of the course. Combined with information about how you studied for the test, as well as your actual experience during the test, you'll be able to identify what you did well, what you were unprepared for, and what skills you can develop in order to improve your performance on future exams.

Each step of the process has an associated worksheet. Use all three to develop a customized action plan for your next round of exams.

What Happened?

Consider the results of the test & Your experience with the test

Error analysis

- What sorts of questions were on the test and where did you lose points?
- What content appeared on the test that you weren't expecting?

Use **worksheet 3** to analyze and reflect on your results

NOTE: If the professor doesn't return tests for students to keep, see if you can set up some time to look at the test during office hours.

Preparation for the test

How did you study and what techniques were most effective?

Use **worksheet 1** to look at how you studied for the test.

Taking the test

What happened during the test and what impact did those things have on your performance?

Use **worksheet 2** to look at what happened when you were taking the test.

Now What?

Make a plan for improved test performance

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POST-TEST ANALYSIS
Worksheet 1: Preparation for the Test

What Happened?
Complete this inventory to record how you studied and what techniques were most effective.

	Helpful	Not helpful	Wish I'd tried
TIME MANAGEMENT: Using time in a way that supports your goals for your performance in the course.			
I made time to prepare for each lecture.			
I attended every lecture.			
I studied lecture notes within 24 hours of taking them (or at least before next lecture).			
Each week, I made a routine investment in each class to avoid falling behind.			
I studied in an environment conducive to my study needs and minimized distractions (e.g., turn off social media) to make the most of my study time.			
During exam preparation, I divided study time into manageable blocks instead of "cramming" or tackling the review all in one sitting.			
INPUT ACTIVITIES: Taking in information by looking, listening, reading, etc.			
I did all assigned readings.			
I previewed upcoming content before class (i.e., skimmed text and reviewed diagrams, headings, or Power Point slides).			
I paid attention in lecture to gather information presented by the instructor.			
During independent study, I primed myself with old material before launching into new content.			
OUTPUT ACTIVITIES: Creating products in and of the learning process.			
I did frequent recall exercises (summarizing in my own words) while reading the textbook.			
I integrated lecture and reading notes.			
I self-quizzed by trying to explain concepts (and/or create some visual representation of them) without using my notes or study aids.			
I practiced answering possible exam questions at different levels of complexity (e.g., recalling facts, understanding ideas, applying what I learned, solving problems, etc).			
I took a practice exam and used the results to guide further study.			
CONSULTING RESOURCES: Seeking assistance from people and other information sources outside of class.			
I regularly looked for gaps in my understanding and then consulted the book, TA, professor, tutor, and/or classmates to help fill gaps.			
I participated in a study group to review material.			
I sought out information about the length of the test, the type of test, and what topics seemed most important to the instructor.			

Now What?
What techniques were most helpful for you?
What new technique(s) will you try as you prepare for the next test?

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Worksheet 2: The Test Experience

What Happened?
Complete this inventory to map out what happened during the test and what impact those things had on your performance.

		Things that may have helped		*Things that may not have helped*
MIND & BODY		I was fully rested.		I got less sleep than I needed to perform at my best.
		I was able to remain focused on the task of answering questions to the best of my ability.		I was distracted and unable to concentrate.
		I employed strategies to increase my confidence (e.g., doing simple problems first,taking some deep breaths).		I became overwhelmed by nervousness or negative self-talk.
TIME USE		I used all of the time allotted to work or check my answers.		I finished early but didn't check my answers.
		I devised a strategy for taking the exam (e.g., based on number of problems, points per problem, and/or difficulty of problems).		I didn't pay attention to how long I had overall and ran out of time before I could finish.
CLARITY of the questions		I asked the TA or professor for clarification of questions I didn't understand.		I didn't want to bother the professor, so I left these problems for last and/or guessed at them.
		I read each question carefully and understood what the question was asking before I started responding.		I rushed and missed problems because I did not read the questions carefully.
THOROUGHNESS in your responses		I applied problem-solving tactics (e.g., working backwards, breaking a problem into easier pieces, drawing pictures, etc.).		If I didn't know the answer right away, I just guessed at random.
		I covered the answers and did my own thinking before looking at the choices.		I found myself second guessing my answer choices as I read through the questions.
		My work was neat and well-organized.		My writing was disorganized and contributed to errors.

Any other noteworthy aspects of your experience during the test?

Now What?
To improve my experience in the next test, I will ...

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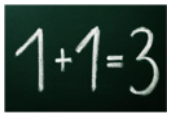
POST-TEST ANALYSIS
Worksheet 3: Analyze & reflect on your results

What Happened?
Complete this inventory as you review the results of your test.

	Applies to me?	Best addressed BEFORE or DURING the exam?	Which question(s) did this affect?
Trouble Recalling I had trouble recalling facts during the exam even though I had studied the information.			
Didn't Study That The exam dealt with material I had not studied.			
Hard Question The content was familiar, but the exam questions were more difficult than I expected.			
Not Enough Time I ran out of time and ended up not finishing the exam or not answering the questions thoroughly.			
Confused by Question I was not sure what the question was asking.			
Misread the Question I misread the question or did not follow the instructions fully.			
 **Simple Mistake** I knew how to answer the question or work the problem but I made an error writing it down (e.g., circled incorrect letter, minor error in arithmetic or copying problem).			

Do you notice any patterns?

Is there anything not listed above that impacted your test performance?

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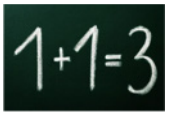
Worksheet 3: Analyze & reflect on your results (cont'd)

Now What?
Now that you have a sense of the types of errors you made, make a plan for next time.

IF ...	CONSIDER ...
Trouble Recalling	Don't just rely on input methods (e.g., reading or "going over" notes) when you study. Practice different ways to output the information. Try the following: • **Self quiz** using book problems or old test questions. • **Recite what you know.** Practice explaining what you know to a classmate, TA, or tutor. • **Create a concept map** that integrates the big picture with the details. Practice making a concept map without the use of your notes.
Didn't Study That	Integrate some new study techniques with your existing homework and reading routine: • **Preview the day's material** 5-10 minutes before lecture (e.g. glance over textbook, PowerPoint slides, etc.) • **Summarize each lecture** in a few sentences to highlight major themes. • **Review your notes** within 24 hours of each lecture. • **Identify points of confusion and gaps** in your notes. Fill in information that is unclear by consulting your textbook, TA, instructor, fellow students, or tutor. • **Integrate your notes** from both lecture and reading. • Refer to the ***Study Cycle*** handout for more ideas on studying strategically. Improve your time management skills: • **Make a weekly to-do list** of items that need to be accomplished. • **Divide big/general goals into small, concrete tasks** that take no more than about one hour (e.g., rather than "read textbook," try "read pg. 23-34." Rather than "study chemistry," try "work problems 1-5." • **Assign each task to a specific time slot.** Use our monthly calendar and weekly schedule templates to make a plan.
Hard Questions	Study and self-quiz at different levels of difficulty: • **Define and recall** concrete facts. • **Engage** with concepts by putting them into your own words. • **Apply** your knowledge to new situations or problems. • **Analyze** by comparing and contrasting; breaking ideas into parts. • Refer to our ***Levels of Learning*** handout for more ideas. Practice test-taking: • **Write or find questions** (e.g., from old exams, textbook, online) similar in style and difficulty to those of the actual exam. • **Simulate test conditions** by putting questions in random order and applying a time limit. • **Get feedback on your answers** by using an answer key, working with a study partner/ group, referring to your TA, or consulting a tutor.

IF ...	CONSIDER ...
Not Enough Time	Practice your pacing: • **Take timed practice tests** and write out answers completely without using your notes. • **Develop a strategy** for taking the test (points, easy first, chronologically, etc.). • If you think the way you use time affects your academic performance in other ways, you may want to look at our series of **handouts on time management**.
Confused by Question	Clarify your understanding of the question: • **Reread the question** slowly. Break the question into parts, if appropriate. • **Ask the instructor** by raising your hand during an exam. • **Identify words** you don't understand and request a definition. • **Answer the question then reread** the question with your answer.
Misread the Question	Slow down and focus. • **Reread instructions** to make sure you understand them completely. • **Underline or write down key facts** in a question. • **Circle or underline words** such as "not" or "all except for" that may be easily misread. • **Organize your response** to multi-part questions. Make sure you answer all parts of the question.
Simple Mistake 	Be proactive about preventing and finding errors: • **Practice keeping your rough work** clean and organized when doing homework and review questions. • **During study, notice the types of errors** you tend to make (e.g., reversing numbers, accidentally skipping questions, miswriting problems). • **Reread your work focusing on accuracy** of the details. Look for errors such as miscopying problems, making a simple calculation mistake, or unintentionally circling an incorrect answer. • **Read the complete list of answer choices** to make sure you don't miss the best response (i.e., on multiple choice exams missing options such as "all of the above" or "both b and d"). • **Allot time for reviewing your answers** either at the end of each question or at the end of the exam.

New action(s) I will take when studying for the next test include:

New action(s) I will take when taking the next test include: