

Test-Taking Strategies

Math Test preparation

Studying for a math test requires a different approach than studying for tests in many other subjects. In many subjects, such as history for example, memorizing facts and dates for a test is important. While formulas and rules do have to be memorized for a math test, the important thing is to know how to use them.

Here are some ideas that will help you study well for a math test.



- Be sure to attend all classes leading up to a test. Teachers usually provide many practice problems that are like the problems that will be on the test.
- Complete all of the problems provided in your textbook. Do this a number of times so that solving the problems becomes routine. Don't just look up the answer to a problem when you become stuck. Keep trying to work the problem out before looking up the answer.
- Review your homework assignments. Redo the problems to ensure your full understanding. Try to find other problems that are similar so that you can get as much practice as possible.
- Use your own words to explain to yourself the steps you are following to solve problems. Doing this will make the problems more

familiar to you and therefore easier to remember how to solve them.

- Distinguish between various types of problems. Look for identifying characteristics of a problem that will give you clues to what type of problem it is and what must be done to solve it.
- Use flash cards to help you memorize formulas and rules.
- Try to understand how a formula is derived so that you will be able to apply it to the various problems that may appear on a test.
- If you are not allowed to use a calculator when taking the test, do all your calculations by hand when studying.
- Study in an active manner. Draw pictures and diagrams of the process involved in solving a problem.
- Start studying early so that you can ask your teacher to clarify any questions you may have.

Remember - you can't just read your textbook to prepare for a math test. You must actively study and practice, practice, practice.

<http://how-to-study.com/study-skills-articles/math-test-preparation.asp>

Multiple Choice Test-taking

Many of the tests you take in school will be multiple-choice tests. Here are two types of items you will often find on multiple-choice tests.

1. *An incomplete statement followed by several answer choices.*

In this type of item, the missing part of the statement can be anywhere in the statement. You must circle the letter that represents the answer choice that correctly completes the statement. Usually there are four answer choices represented by the letters a, b, c, and d. Sometimes there are more than four answer choices.

Here is an example of this type of item:

The first president of the United States, _____, was known as the "Father of his country."

- a. Thomas Jefferson
- b. Abraham Lincoln
- c. George Washington
- d. Theodore Roosevelt



You should circle "c" to show that George Washington was the first president of the United States.

2. A question followed by several answer choices.

In this type of item, you must circle the letter that represents the answer choice that correctly answers the question.

Here is an example of this type of item:

How many states make up the United States of America?

- a. 48
- b. 52
- c. 46
- d. 50

You should circle "d" to show that 50 is the correct answer choice for this question.

Sometimes, one of the answer choices is "all of the above." In the following example, "e" is the correct answer choice because all of the foods shown are dairy products.

Which of the following foods are dairy products?

- a. milk
- b. ice cream
- c. yogurt
- d. cream cheese
- e. all of the above

Other times, one of the answer choices is "none of the above." In the following example, "b" is the correct answer choice because Argentina is the only country listed that is in South America. For "e" to be correct, none of the countries listed could be in South America.

_____ is a country in South America.

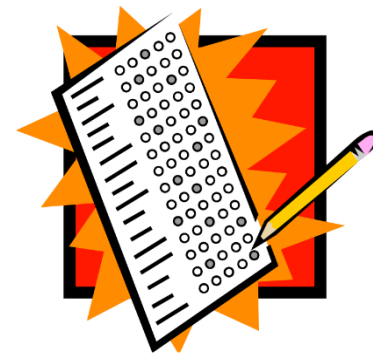
- a. Russia
- b. Argentina
- c. Mexico
- d. Japan
- e. none of the above



Guidelines When Taking Multiple-Choice Tests

Here are some guidelines that will help you correctly answer multiple-choice items.

1. **Circle or underline important words in the item.** This will help you focus on the information most needed to identify the correct answer choice.
2. **Read all the answer choices before selecting one.** It is just as likely for the last answer choice to be correct as the first.
3. **Cross out answer choices you are certain are not correct.** This will help you narrow down the correct answer choice.
4. **Look for two answer choices that are opposites.** One of these two answer choices is likely to be correct.
5. **Look for hints about the correct answer choice in other items on the test.** The correct answer choice may be part of another item on the test.
6. **Look for answer choices that contain language used by your teacher or found in your textbooks.** An answer choice that contains such language is usually correct.
7. **Do not change your initial answer unless you are sure another answer choice is correct.** More often than not, your first choice is correct.
8. **Choose "all of the above" if you are certain all other answer choices in the item are correct.** Do not choose "all of the above" if even just one of the other answer choices is not correct.
9. **Choose "none of the above" if you are certain all other answer choices in the item are incorrect.** Do not choose "none of the above" if even just one of the other answer choices is correct.



Knowing how multiple-choice items are constructed and using these guidelines will help you improve your score on a multiple-choice test.

<http://how-to-study.com/study-skills-articles/multiple-choice-tests.asp>

Tests such as [multiple-choice tests](#) and [true/false tests](#) assess specific factual knowledge. When you study for these tests, your goal should be to recognize facts.

Studying for Essay Tests

Essay tests assess your mastery of themes and overall ideas. When you study for essay tests, your goal should be to recall broad information in an organized way. Your studying for essay tests should be related to this goal.

Here are the steps to follow when studying for an essay test.

1. Assemble the materials that contain the information that will be covered on the test. This includes your textbook, your textbook notes, and your class notes.
2. Read these materials to identify themes and overall ideas. Each time you identify one, label an index card with the name of that theme or overall idea. You will often find the same theme or overall idea in one or more places, but use just one card to represent it.
3. For each card you prepare in Step 2, carefully review your textbook, textbook notes, and class notes and add written details about the theme or overall idea to the card.
4. Once you have completed Step 3 for each card, review your cards several times. Doing this will give you a working familiarity with the information that is most likely to be the basis of questions on the test.
5. Now is the time to think like your teacher. Try to predict the questions your teacher will ask on the test. Write each question on its own index card. When writing the questions, [include direction words](#) often used by teachers, such as explain or compare.

6. For each card you prepared in Step 5, write a response to the question on that card (write on the back of the card and on additional cards if necessary). Use the cards you developed in Step 3 to help you answer each question. When you complete Step 6, you will have a set of study cards, each containing a possible test question and a written response to that question.
7. Carry the study cards you developed in Step 6 with you so that you can review them frequently. Be sure to review these cards the evening before the test.

Essay tests can be scary. Take the scare out of them by following the study steps above.

<http://how-to-study.com/study-skills-articles/studying-for-an-essay-test.asp>

Writing an Essay Test Question

An essay test item requires you to recall and organize information and to communicate the information in an extended writing form. Your response to any essay test item should be:

- **Focused.** Write specifically to the question. Think about what you want to convey before you begin to write your answer. Don't pad your answer with all kinds of information in the hope that some of the information will be relevant to the question.
- **Organized.** Plan what you want to write before you actually begin to write your answer. Don't write your answer in a haphazard "think-as-you-go" manner. It is very helpful to prepare an outline that contains all the necessary points you want to have in your answer. Following the outline will help you produce a fluid answer that is easy for your teacher to follow.
- **Supported.** Do more than just state your points. Provide evidence for what you write. Using examples is an excellent way to bring your points across.



Here are some tips that will help you do your best when responding to an essay test item:

- Look to see if there is a direction word that tells you what you need to do to respond to the item.
- Write your answer legibly so that you do not have to waste time rewriting it.
- Budget your time if the test includes more than one item that must be answered. Don't spend so much time on one item that you have to rush to respond to the remainder of the test. In general, spend the most time on the items that count for the most points.
- Don't give your personal opinion unless the item calls for it.
- Use an approximation if you are not sure about an exact date or number. For example, rather than "1748," you could write "in the middle of the 18th century."
- Cross out anything you write but want to delete. This is faster and neater than trying to erase it.
- If you have time left after answering everything required, proofread your work quickly to correct any errors in spelling and mechanics, or any factual errors.