

How to Write My Tests

You'll be facing three midterms and a final from me this semester. Hopefully the tips given below will help you get through the tests a little more easily than you might have otherwise.

- 1) **Get a good night's sleep.** Nothing helps test performance better than a clear head. This is especially important for 8:00 A.M. classes.
- 2) **Use the washroom *before* you write the test.** Nothing is worse than having to use the washroom halfway through a test, unless of course you *like* using up valuable test-writing time by doing something you could have done before the test started...
- 3) **Remember to breathe.** If at some point you get stuck during the test, do whatever you need to do to relax and refocus (stretching, deep breathing...).
- 4) **When in doubt, ask.** I do my very best to make the tests error-free, but it may be that, in spite of my efforts, you find a question to be poorly worded, or you might think you're missing a piece of information you need to do the question. If that's the case, *ask me*. You gain nothing by not asking.
- 5) **Don't do the questions in order.** Look through the test before you start and do the questions you feel most comfortable with *first*.
- 6) **Write vital information on your test.** If there's something you think you'll need to know for the test and are likely to forget, write it on the test as soon as you get it.
- 7) **Pace yourself.** Questions worth 2 marks generally take twice as long as questions worth 1 mark. Questions worth 3 marks generally take three times as long as a 1-mark question. This isn't a strict rule, but it should be a guide for your pace.
- 8) **Write something for every question.** I can't give you part marks for questions that you leave blank. Having said that, though, you'll only be assigned part marks if what you wrote was (part of) a correct answer to the question.
- 9) **Read the whole question.** Students lose many marks because they don't. Help yourself by highlighting or underlining the actual "What is the..." or "Calculate the..." part of the question so you can quickly check that you've given the answer I've asked for.
- 10) **Write down the information given.** Filtering out the relevant words/information from the other words in the question will sometimes point you in the right direction to solving a problem. Highlighting/underlining might help here too. At the very least, it'll stop you from having to reread the question every time you need a new number from it.
- 11) **Invent answers.** Let's suppose you're facing a question that has parts a, b, c, and d. Let's further suppose that you need to use the answer from part a in part b. This is a real problem if you don't know how to do part a. If you're stuck like this, *invent a number to use in part b*. If you do part b correctly but with the wrong starting number, I'll still give you full marks for part b.
- 12) **Don't second-guess yourself.** It's been my experience that a student's first instinct for solving a question is usually correct. Don't redo a question unless you are very (very) confident your initial solution was incorrect.

I guess that's about all I can think of. I hope this helps.