

S.M.A.R.T. Test Taking Skills

Studying

- Focus your limited study resource time on the areas where you are weakest.
- Use study guides or practice exams (where available) to identify problem areas.
- Don't rely on "cramming" right before the exam. If you do, the information will be stored in your short-term memory and will not as easily be retained in your long-term memory for later retrieval.

Memorization

- Seek an acronym to help memorize sequences of items where order is important. The more unusual the acronym or sequence, the better your mind will retain it.
 - My Very Efficient Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas (the order of the planets from the sun)
- Associate sequences or steps with the steps in a common activity that you do
 - Example:
- Scan over any formulas you may need right before getting the test, then *immediately* write them down somewhere on the test when you get it.

Answering questions

Multiple Choice Exams

- Eliminate obvious wrong answers
- Once eliminated, and you can't narrow further, go with first guess
- Look for changed entry in m/c list, indicating correct answer
- For mathematics exams, you should check the answer you chose to make sure it correctly answers the question
 - In some circumstances you can work backwards from each of the answers to see if it matches the question asked
- Guess if there is no penalty for wrong answers. Never leave a question unanswered. (If you guess, you have some chance to get it right. If you don't, there is a 100% chance you'll get it wrong!)

Resources

Use the test itself as resource

- Be on the lookout for questions that contain an answer to previously encountered questions.
- Watch for the questions that are asking the same thing, but are phrased differently in another place.

Teachers should be willing to help

- Always ask clarification questions if a problem is not clear to you. Ask for pictures if it will help.
- Sometimes an instructor will offer additional information if one of the questions is poorly or ambiguously worded.

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Time

- Don't rush. You'll make more mistakes.
- Mark answers you're unsure about, then come back later if you have time with a fresh look at the problem. Later questions may clarify the question you're unsure about.
- If you find yourself bogged down on a particular question, mark it with a question mark and move on. Finish it later, if you have time. Don't let a struggle with one problem cause the rest of the problems (that may be easier) to get less attention.