



Taking Tests

General Test Taking Strategies

- **Arrive early**
Plan to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the test starts.
- **Make memory notes**
As soon as the test is handed out, quickly jot down on the back of the test any material you are worried about forgetting (a definition, a formula, a date).
- **Preview the test**
Skim through the test looking at the type and number of questions asked. This enables you to anticipate the content of the test and helps you budget your time.
- **Budget your time**



Think through the meaning of each key word you have circled.

e. g. What does behavioral mean? What is a characteristic? What is a schizophrenic?

Simplify questions, if necessary, by turning them into statements that the options complete.

e. g. Which of the following is the best method of treating depression?

Depression is best treated by ...

Step 2: Answer the question in your head before reading the options.

This will enable you to produce the answer in your own words and will prevent you from getting confused by the way the options are written or by the variety of options.

Step 3: Look for the correct option systematically.

Students often mark options A or B without having read all the other options. However, the option chosen may not be the best one. Another problem students have when selecting an option is that they read all the possible options one after the other and get



- a) Calcium
- b) Vitamin C
- c) Vitamin D
- d) a and c
- e) a and b
- f) all of the above



A well-written essay question defines the topic and gives clues as to the information to include. Read the question carefully several times. Underline or circle key words and make sure you know how many parts there are to the question. Use key words in the test question, such as describe, discuss, compare, to understand what approach you are to take when answering the question.

e. g. Trace the history of the stock exchange in Alberta

Your essay would be limited to discussing only the stock exchange's history, not its function or purpose, and only in Alberta.

e. g. Describe Sheldon's three personality types and discuss which type you think you are.

This question has four parts.

Step 3: Organize your answer.

Before you begin to write your essay, brainstorm to recall as many points as possible that are relevant to the question. Then organize the points quickly into an outline that separates the main points and supporting details and lists the order in which you'll discuss them. An outline has many advantages:

It makes sure you stay on track and answer the question being asked. It prevents you from repeating yourself. It keeps your writing organized and helps you to see when to begin new paragraphs. It encourages you to think and develop your ideas before you begin writing your answer which helps to make your writing clear and error free.

Step 4: Write your answer.

Start to write the body of your essay by following your outline closely. You may not have time for a lengthy introduction, so open the essay with a thesis sentence. The thesis sentence tells the reader what the essay is going to be about. The reader then knows what the information in your essay pertains to and can follow the logic of your ideas. Develop the thesis sentence from the essay question itself as shown below.

Essay Question: Compare and contrast two sociological views of the family.

Thesis Sentence: Conflict theorists and functionalist theorists views have some similar views of the family but also have some different perspectives.

Essay Question: Identify and discuss the three theories of juvenile delinquency.

Thesis Sentence: Conflict theory, structural interactionist theory, and structural functionalist theory are the three main theories of juvenile delinquency.

