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Topic: How to Do Your Best on High School and College Exams

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Posted by: EastCoast

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How to Do Your Best on High School and College Exams

As you near the end of your high school years, you've likely become quite a pro at taking testsâ€”from standardized multiple choice exams to short answers to more intense essay tests.

Exhausted as you may be from all this test taking, the good news is that these experiences will serve you well in college. Many of the test formats that you are used to will be similar to the ones you'll see again and again. The difference is that college-level tests will cover more material on more complicated subjects. Use the rest of your time in high school to try out the following suggested test-taking techniques.

Multiple Choice

Read instructions carefully to see if there can be more than one answer.

Cover the choices with your hand and answer the question in your head first. Then check to see if your response is there.

Eliminate answers you know aren't right.

Read all the choices before choosing your final answer.

Don't change your answer over and over. Generally your first instinct is right (unless you've misread the question).

If you can't answer a question right away, put a mark next to it and come back to it later.

Make educated guesses if there is no penalty for wrong answers.

Use clues from questions you can answer to help you with questions you can't answer.

True/False Test

If any part of the question is false, the answer is false.

Words such as never, always, and every mean that the statement must be true all of the time.

Statements with these kinds of words are often false.

Words such as usually, sometimes, and generally mean that the statement can be true or false depending on the situation. Statements with these types of words are often true.

Essay Tests

Read questions carefully to be sure you know exactly what they are asking. For example, if a question asks you to summarize, don't include every last detail.

Create an outline before you write. Use the outline to organize your thoughts and let you get right to the point when you start writing. If you don't have time to finish writing you may get partial credit for the ideas that you have outlined.

If the question asks for facts, don't give your opinion.

Keep your introductions and conclusions brief. An effective method is to repeat part of the question in the topic sentence to show that you are answering exactly what is asked.

Write clearly and concisely. Provide just one main idea per paragraph, and include details to support that idea.

Budget your time. If you have an hour to write two essays, don't spend more than 30 minutes on each.

Write neatly so professors can read your answers.

Proofread your work.

Short Answer

Prepare for short answer tests by using flash cards with definitions of key terms and phrases discussed in class.

Make an educated guess if you don't know an answer. A partially correct answer will gain you more test points than leaving it blank.

Respond with simple, concise sentences, not long flowery ones. Try to pack each sentence with important information.

Open Book Test

With open-book tests, it's all about preparation, especially organizing your resources. Here are some preparation tips:

Put tabs on important pages in the books you'll be using so you can find critical information easily and quickly during the test.

Know the layout and structure of your text books.

Number your class notes and create a coordinating table of contents for easy access on test day.

Write down formulas and other data you'll need on a separate sheet of paper.