

Test-Taking Skills



Student Success Series, No. 4

Test: Make It or Break It When You Take It



First of all:
Don't Worry
We're in this Together!
We're Going to Work Together
We've Got This!

Golden Rules:

Log in to Canvas at least 5 days a week.

Check your email at least twice a day.

Check our website (northshorecollege.edu) for updates at least twice a day.

If your class has a forum or message board, check it twice a day.

Utilize the resources on our website under "Library" and under "Students/Keep Learning."

Taking tests, it's part of life.

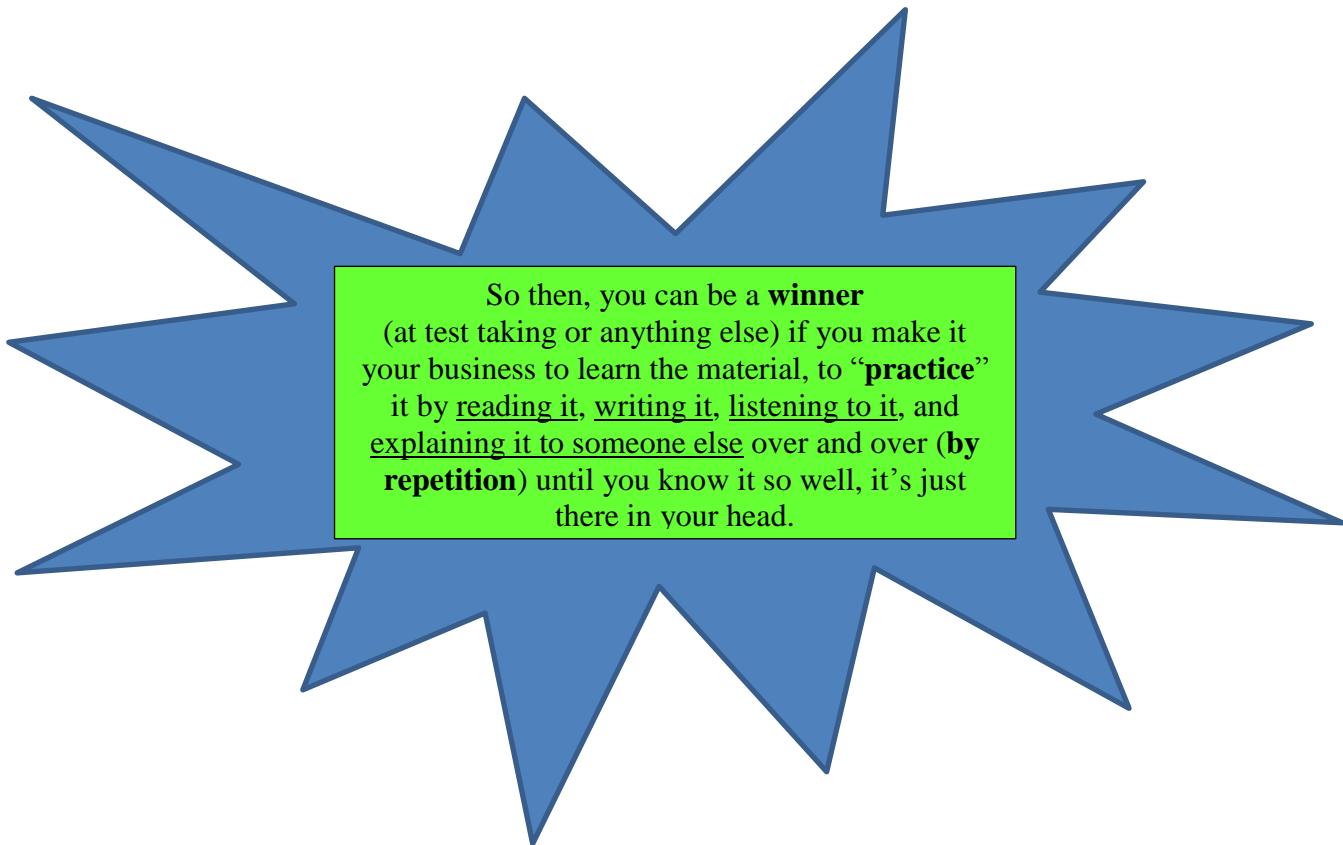
Winning at a football game, a video game, or a math test is all the same:

winning boils down to knowing about the material

(that includes **football plays, video game techniques,**
or how to utilize a math formula).



A **TEST** is a **conTEST** (just like any sport or game). **If you want to compete**, what do you have to do? **Practice**. Do things over and over with repetition until they are second nature to you.



1 Review the handout and short video for Success Series No. 3: Good Notes Lead to Less Stress on Tests. The first test-taking skill is **PRACTICE**. Practice = review your material regularly and with repetition so that you lock it into long-term memory.

2 Review your syllabus or email your Instructor to **FIND OUT WHAT KIND OF QUIZ/TEST/EXAM** you have next.

Is it a multiple choice test? Is it one essay? Or are there several essay questions you will need to answer? Is it short answers? True/False questions? Do you have to demonstrate a skill? Do you have to draw a graph or a diagram?

3 Regardless of what kind of test it is, **LOOK OVER THE WHOLE TEST BEFORE YOU BEGIN** to answer questions. Answer the ones you’re sure about. In Canvas, you can flag questions on quizzes and tests and go back to them at the end. Don’t second-guess the ones you’ve already answered.

Strategies for Different Kinds of Tests

Here are some great tips from Oregon State University¹ for taking **Multiple Choice Tests**:

On your first pass through the test, don't guess on questions. Answer the questions you know, and mark the ones you don't know or are unsure of so that you can revisit them later. If, on a second visit to the question, you're still unsure of the answer, try out some problem-solving strategies:

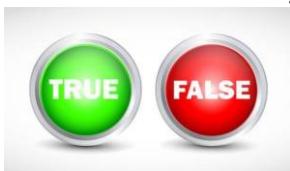


- **Critically read the question.** Underline key concept words as well as absolute words like "never," "all," and "always."
- **Read and consider all of the answers.** You need to select the BEST answer, even though there may be more than one good answer (Van Blerkom, 2010). Try to select the answer that is *more true* than the other answers.
- **Narrow down distracting answers.** When you're unsure of an answer, eliminate answers you know are incorrect so that you're choosing from a shorter list of possible answers.
- **Look for clues in other questions.** At times, tests include clues or bits of information that jog your memory, and these may show up in other questions or portions. Use these clues to help you answer the question you are unsure of.

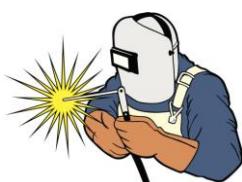


For **Essay Questions**, read through all of the questions or prompts first. Divide the number of questions you have according to how much time you have. If you have 4 essay questions and 2 hours, you know that you can devote 30 minutes to each essay. For each question, jot down the main points you want to cover in your answer. This will help to keep you focused so that you will cover all of the important facts in your answer.

For **Short Answers**, read the instructions carefully. Is the Instructor asking for complete sentences, or can you use words and phrases? Read all of the questions or prompts. Reading all of the questions or prompts first will help you to get a feel for how much time you will need for each.



For **True/False Questions**, read the question carefully and look for words like "always," "never," and "must." Think about the questions carefully before you answer.



For **Demonstrating a Skill or Drawing a Diagram or Graph**, **practice makes perfect**. Learn from your syllabus or your instructor what he expects you to have learned well enough to demonstrate it. Practice it until you can do it in your sleep.

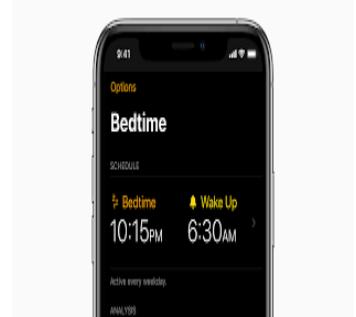


¹ Test Types and Their Strategies, OR. STATE UNIV., <https://success.oregonstate.edu/learning/test-types> (last visited 4/13/2020).

Sweet Sleep



Sleeping well enables us to feel rested, be more alert, and think more clearly. **Sleep at least 7 hours and no more than 9.** “Recent studies have proven that those who sleep well are more alert and have higher cognitive processing and a more positive outlook.”² Sleep plays an important role in learning and memory. **It is during sleep, that information gets locked into long-term memory.** Make sure you get the proper amount of sleep. Go to bed and wake up at the same times every day. **Routine makes life less stressful.**



A Sweet Tip: Peppermint Stimulates Your Brain³ **Who Knew?**



“The Washington Post” reported in 2007 that more and more schools are encouraging students to **eat peppermint candy to boost test scores.** Peppermint candy contains peppermint oil and sugar, two important ingredients that **energize your brain.** Research shows that **peppermint stimulates the brain by improving memory and increasing alertness while helping it relax.** Your body breaks down sugar to glucose—the main fuel source for your brain.” In addition:

A study published in the 2008 “International Journal of Neuro-science” found that participants exposed to peppermint oil experienced **enhanced memory and processing speeds.** Peppermint also increased their alertness while helping them maintain a sense of calm. In 2006, Dr. Bryan Raudenbush from Wheeling Jesuit University found that drivers exposed to peppermint scent were less frustrated, **anxious and fatigued** and stayed more alert after driving for prolonged periods.

An article published in 2005 in the “North American Journal of Psychology” found that when participants **chewed peppermint-flavored gum, they experienced significantly improved memory and worked faster.** However, when they smelled peppermint, memory improved slightly and participants had less fatigue and more vigor. If you are taking a test or working on a complex project, eating peppermint candy may improve your memory and give you the energy you need to complete the task at hand.

Test Anxiety



gg68822905 GoGraph.com

Anxiety is normal and natural. We all experience it at different times and at different levels.

Anxiety helps to give us an edge. Think about a job interview, a big game, your wedding, etc. We perform better when we feel a little anxious. Anxiety helps us to study beforehand and to focus when we need it.



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² NECTAR, <https://www.nectarsleep.com/> (last visited 4/10/2010).

³ Kristin Mortensen, *Does Peppermint Stimulate the Brain?*, LEAF, <https://www.leaf.tv/6321753/does-peppermint-candy-stimulate-the-brain/> (last visited 4/10/2010) (emphasis added).

But What Can We Do When We Get TOO Anxious:

**BELIEVE IN
YOURSELF**

Breathe deeply when you get confused.

Stop what you're doing/studying, and breathe deeply and slowly three full breaths.

Refocus.

Continue.

Do the same before you start a test and during a test.

Don't second-guess yourself.

If you've studied regularly, **believe in yourself.**

The work you did regularly will pay off.

Fight or Flight?

The test isn't the enemy.

Change the way you think about it.

Look on it as a **tool** that helps you to achieve your goal: your goal of becoming a more knowledgeable person—everything you learn helps you to figure out the next thing. A test is just the mile-marker that helps you to move to the next part of your journey.

If you view a quiz/test/exam as a positive thing that helps you achieve your goal, instead of a negative thing, slowly but surely, you'll be less and less anxious. **It's mind over matter.** And the mind is one of the most powerful things on earth. If you decide to be positive about testing, you'll change your focus and become less anxious. Following the steps in this Success Series will help you accomplish it!

*You
can
do it*

Good Test-Taking Strategies	
DO	DON'T
Practice regularly for the weeks before the quiz/test/exam. Study at the same time 6 days a week = routine.	Don't cram. Cramming doesn't allow you to repeat the material and sleep in between so that it will go into long-term memory.
Go to sleep at the same time every night. Lay your clothes out, and plan breakfast. Sleep at least 7 hours, but no more than 9.	Don't pull all-night study sessions for the reason above.
Set an alarm, allow yourself no more than 1 snooze, and wake up at the same time every morning. Plug in your laptop before bed!	Don't go to bed late and snooze until the last minute.
Eat a nutritious breakfast of carbs and protein for both quick and long-lasting energy.	Don't go without breakfast.
Review while you're brushing your teeth and eating breakfast. If you have recorded your notes, listen.	Don't go into a test without focusing your mind on the material.

Remember:

- **Practice** by taking good notes, reviewing, summarizing/studying, and testing yourself regularly.
- Find out **what kind** of quiz/test/exam you can expect, and study and plan accordingly.
- Get into a **routine** of studying and sleeping at regular times!
- Always **review your entire test before you begin**, and then plan your time accordingly.
- **Believe in yourself.** When you begin to doubt yourself, listen to the voice that says, “I’ve been working and studying hard. I know a lot about this material. I can do this!”

Practice “social distancing.” That means avoid close contact with others as much as possible. Avoid being around people, and when you have to be near others, stay at least 13 feet apart. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Wash them often.

IMPORTANT: If you have questions or need anything, email successcoach@northshorecollege.edu.

Whatever you do,
Stay positive and keep your chin up.

We believe in you.
You can do it!

