General Strategies

Test Taking

The following is a list of generic suggestions for taking tests.

1. **Bring the materials you need for the test.**
   This includes such items as pencil, paper, blue books, and calculator.

2. **Arrive on time.**
   A. If you arrive early, do not talk about the test with other students. The way they studied could confuse you. The concerns of others tend to increase any worries you have.
   
   B. If you arrive late, you may miss important verbal directions. Arriving late also makes you feel rushed. If you come late, take a minute to relax and get organized. Ask your instructor for help if you feel confused.

3. **Write down formulas or processes you need as soon as you get your test paper.**
   This clears your mind for thinking rather than simply storing information. It also eases the stress of worrying about forgetting.

4. **Preview the test.**
   Note the total number of items. Identify differences in point values. Judge the amount of time you should spend on each item. Base this estimate on the subject matter and your knowledge of it. Also consider your skill at answering different types of questions. Spend the most time on questions that receive the most credit.

5. **Read all directions slowly and carefully.**
   Many students ignore test directions. That's a mistake. Directions often state information you need to get full credit. They also provide information about the way you need to mark answers. Some instructors refuse to give credit for right answers that are not correctly marked.

6. **Underline key terms and steps in the directions and in each question.**

7. **Use appropriate test-wiseness strategies.**
8. **Answer the easiest questions first.**
   This builds your confidence. It also triggers your memory for other information.
   Likewise, if you run out of time before you complete the test, you will have
   answered the questions you knew.

9. **Expect memory blocks.**
   Mark difficult questions, then skip them and go on. Return to these questions
   when time permits, if only to guess.

10. **Attempt every question.**

11. **Make your responses neat and legible.**

12. **Unless you are using a special form that will be scanned for scoring, cross
    out incorrect information instead of taking time to erase.**

13. **Work at your own pace.**
    Do not worry if others leave before you.

14. **Review the questions and your answers.**
    Be sure you understood each question. Also check that you marked the correct
    response. Some students think it is always better to stay with their first answer.
    This may be true for them. You find out what's best for you by looking at one of
    your old tests. Count the number of questions you changed to correct answers.
    Compare that total with the number you changed to incorrect answers.

*Source: Study Methods and Reading Techniques, Rhonda Atkinson and Debbie Longman (1993), West Publishing.*