



Tips for Studying and Test Taking

Determine if you are a visual or auditory learner. Complete a 20-question quiz at <http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles-quiz.shtml> to determine if you are a visual, auditory or tactile learner. Some will primarily prefer one style or the other, while some people can learn by using a combination of methods. Following the quiz, you'll see tips to help you study based on your learning type.

Give yourself time. Learn by “chunking,” not “cramming.” Chunking is studying the same content multiple times over several days and weeks. Repetition of the material over days and weeks results in better learning, not just attempted and fleeting memorization. Chunking substantially reduces the likelihood of forgetting what you just read or reviewed that typically occurs within the first 20-30 minutes to 24 hours after stopping studying.

Devise study tools. If you are a visual learner, make flash cards, highlight items in different colors and practice visualization of the material you study. Draw diagrams or illustrations. Auditory learners can look for books on tape or record their own notes that can be played back on handheld devices or while driving. Mixed visual and auditory learners can have the best of both worlds and do some or all of the suggested methods.

Use the power of association. If you have terms or definitions that you need to remember, create an acronym. Many students can remember the mathematical order of operations long after leaving school by using the made-up word, “PEMDAS” (parentheses first, then exponents, multiply, divide, add or subtract). Create your own words, rhymes, songs or whatever makes studying memorable for you. Partner up with a study buddy if it works for you.

Take regular breaks. Hours of studying without a break can be counterproductive. After a while, you begin to lose your focus and although you think you're studying, while you stare blankly at the page in front of you, another part of your mind is elsewhere making a grocery list. Scientists say that even brief breaks can dramatically improve your ability to focus on the task at hand for prolonged periods.

Go to bed! Make sure to get a good night's sleep the night before. You get to rest and your brain gets to repair itself while you sleep. Even an hour less sleep can affect your test scores the next day.

Eat something light and healthy before the exam. Feed your brain with healthy fresh fruits and vegetables before your examination. Avoid chocolate, fried foods, junk foods, sugary drinks or highly caffeinated beverages.

Drink up me hearties, yo ho! Drink plenty of water while studying (and leave the rum for later). It seems that a well-hydrated brain functions better. Studies show that students who took a drink into an examination scored higher, by as much as 5% to 10% higher, than students who did not drink during studying and testing, who became thirsty or were dehydrated. Don't drink too much though, as bathroom breaks may be a distraction!

Arrive alive and on time! You don't need the added stress of not knowing where you are going or being late on test day. Plan. There's an app for that on most mobile devices these days. Review your appointment information to ensure you are aware of the correct date, day of the week and appointment time. Program the testing site address and phone number into your selected device a few days before your examination.

Use lavender and peppermint. Are you a nervous Nellie when it comes to test taking, or maybe you have trouble concentrating? Lavender is known to have a relaxing effect. A study published on Pub Med indicates that "inhaling lavender oil caused significant decreases of blood pressure, heart rate and skin temperature." Study participants who inhaled the lavender oil "categorized themselves as more active, fresher and relaxed than subjects just inhaling base oil." In an article published on Natural News, "research shows the aroma of peppermint is a natural remedy for boosting memory, focus and concentration. Whether in the form of essential oil, fresh mint leaves or brewed tea, the refreshing scent of peppermint may be just what you need to perk up your mind."

Read the instructions carefully or listen to the instructions carefully as they are given to you. Know how to properly mark your answers and how to navigate within the examination. Be aware of any time limit before you start.

Answer the question. Go through the examination questions and answer the easy questions, the ones that you know for sure, first. Then go back to unanswered questions and answer them using methodical reasoning. Eliminate obviously wrong answers. If you are still unsure, use your knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, punctuation and grammar. Be careful of sweeping generalities in answers containing words like "always, never, guarantees, ensures." If you choose the "all of the above" or "none of the above" option, make sure that you have evaluated each answer and that it meets the criteria of being true or false. If you still don't know, make the most educated guess that you can.

Answer all the questions unless you will be penalized! Don't leave any answers blank unless the grading system is based on the number of questions answered correctly out of the total number of questions answered. If you listened to the instructions, you will know the grading system before you start. If it's not covered in the instructions, ask before the test begins.

Trust your gut and resist the urge to change your answer. Unless you know for sure that you made a mistake when you first answered the question, leave it. Chances are you selected the correct answer the first time and making a change now may result in changing the answer from the correct one to an incorrect one.

You made it! Now wasn't that easy?