

Exam Success: Taking Exams

Right before the exam:

- **Review summaries and outlines** rather than trying to cram at the last minute.
- Make sure that you've **packed everything needed to take the exam**, including pens, colored pencils, and calculator.
- **Avoid contact** with anyone who might cause you stress.
- **Arrive a few minutes early** to the exam.

Read the entire test first:

- **Confirm** that you have the whole exam.
- **Note** point distributions and special instructions.

Plan and apportion your time.

- **Allocate** the amount of time you spend on a question based on the credit you'll receive for answering it correctly.
- **Answer** easy questions first and then move to harder ones.
- **Mark** any question in the margin that you need to come back to.

Problem-solving sections:

- **Highlight, circle, or otherwise indicate** what your final answer is, but don't obliterate any work that you've done. You may receive partial credit for that work.
- Make **diagrams** and **graphs** big and easy to read.
- If you get stuck, **make a note to yourself in the margin** about what you need to do and come back to the problem later.
- If you're worried that your answer is wrong, **explain the process** by which you arrived at that answer. Here again, partial credit may be rewarded.

Essay sections:

- **Underline** key terms in the questions.
- Make sure that your essay **does what the instructions call for** (common verbs in instructions are: analyze, trace, explain, discuss, compare, contrast).
- **Write an outline** at the beginning of your answer or in the margins. This will help you structure your response and may be a source of partial credit if you run out of time.
- **Answer** every part of the question.
- **Provide** textual examples, references, data, graphs, etc.

Multiple-choice sections:

- **Don't over interpret** questions.
- **Read** every answer.
- **Eliminate answers** that you know to be wrong or that are highly unlikely.
- **Trust your first instincts** and change an answer only if you actually remember the correct one.

Short answer and identification sections:

- Be **clear** and **precise**.
- **Cite significance** of thing, person, place being identified.
- **Define** key terms.
- **Don't spend too much time** on any one question.

If you get stuck...

- **Mark** that question in the margin and come back to it later.
- **Answer** what you do know first. This might help you think of more information.
- **Write down** what you do know. It may help you remember more.