



***Enhanced Learning
Educational Services***
“the study skills specialist”

TEST-TAKING TECHNIQUES



Knowing how to make the most of your time in tests and examinations ensures you have the best chance of demonstrating your knowledge in a test!

- You should read each point and **highlight the key phrases** in that point.
- Discuss with a friend or parent as you read through the handout.
- You may like to work through this over a number of sessions.



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Enhanced Learning Educational Services Profile

Our Organisation:

Enhanced Learning Educational Services (ELES) is the leading provider of study skills resources in Australia. Since 2001 over 500,000 students across Australia have benefited from our study skills worksheets and workbooks. An Australian business based in Sydney, our clients extend throughout Australia and to international schools overseas. We are committed to helping all students improve their ability to learn and study by providing study skills seminars and resources on the topics students need.

Our Mission:

To provide a worthwhile and effective service to teachers, students and parents, enhancing students' learning skills and abilities through dynamic programs, resources and strategies to unlock the power of the mind and enable greater success at school and in life.

Our Commitment:

As part of ELES' commitment to education, 5% of all gross income is donated to charities that help and assist children.

For further information about ELES or our products or contact details:

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1. A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE TEST

Consider which section of the test you will tackle first.

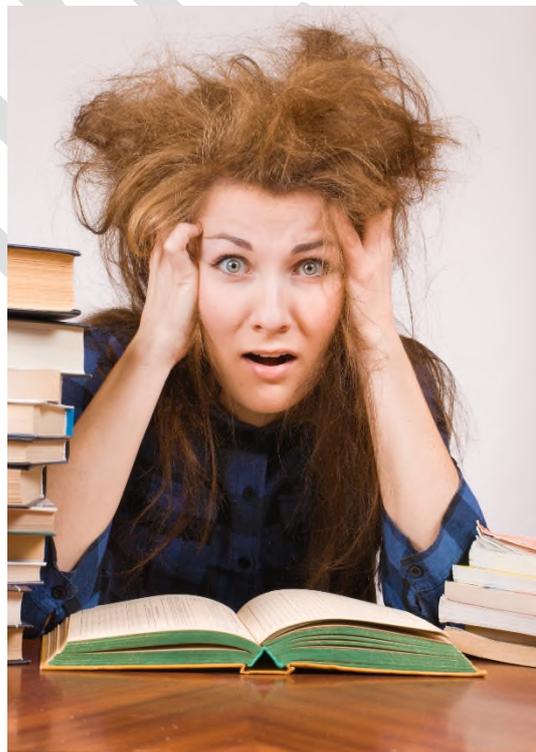
Some students like:

- To jot down points for all their plans first as they go through the paper from the beginning.
- To work through the paper methodically from start to finish.
- To do the easier questions first to build confidence and momentum and get some time up their sleeves.
- To go for the questions with the most marks or the more difficult questions first.

You need to decide what suits you best.

There are a number of other things you can do. Tick which of the following you have tried:

- Plan out how much time you should spend on each section of the test.
- By looking at past papers, get a feel for the types of instructions that will be on your paper.
- Do some exercise so you can burn off the pent-up stress that can come before exams.
- Look after your body – lots of water to juice up your brain, healthy food, good amount of sleep.
- To calm nerves, make mental pictures of yourself sitting down and doing well in the test.
- Ensure you know what equipment is allowed in the test or exam.
- Find or purchase any equipment you may need, extra calculator batteries, pens, rulers etc.
- Focus on reviewing the key points, perhaps use a condensed version of your summaries.
- Practise as many past test papers as you can get your hands on.
- If you have a number of exams, check the timetable to ensure you have a clear picture of when each exam is being held.



a. Do you have a process you follow a few days before the exams? Are there any of these steps that you don't do that you should do?

2. THE NIGHT BEFORE THE TEST

There are a number of other things you can do. Tick which of the following you have tried:

- Pack your bag with everything you will need for the next day, ensuring you have all necessary equipment.
- Plan what time you need to leave to ensure you have plenty of time for unexpected delays.
- Don't go to bed too late – you need to make sure your brain is fresh and alert. Get enough sleep.
- Don't ring friends and discuss your preparation or the examination. It might stress you.
- Just before you go to sleep, look through your notes briefly.
- If you have a number of exams, check the timetable to doubly confirm the date, time and location of the exam.



DISCUSS

b. Do you do all of these the night before the exam? What else could you do to improve your preparation the night before the exam?

3. THE MORNING OF THE TEST

- **VISUALISE SUCCESS:** When you wake up, keep your eyes closed but create a mental picture of yourself going to school, walking into the exam room, sitting down, opening the paper and feeling good about the questions. Picture yourself writing away, answering the questions and having a sense of relief and satisfaction about the paper when you are told to put your pen down at the end. Run this image through your mind like a movie and it will help you approach the test or exam with a positive attitude.
- **REVIEW YOUR NOTES:** Once you have done the visualisations, look calmly through your final study notes. Don't try and memorise at this point in time, just read through to refresh your memory of the material.
- **EAT BREAKFAST:** It is absolutely essential to eat a decent breakfast the morning of your test or exam. Your brain needs fuel to function efficiently and with maximum performance. Some examples of beneficial food for breakfast are: toast, cereal and milk, juice, eggs,



bananas, yogurt, fruit etc. Make sure you also drink lots of water in order to keep your brain functioning properly and to prevent memory interference.

- **BE ON TIME:** Leave yourself plenty of time to get to school that day. If you are worried about sleeping in, set a number of alarms (alarm clock, mobile phone) as well and tell your parents what time they should wake you. Allow time in the morning to get yourself ready, ensure you packed everything you needed last night, and can make it to school despite any delays that may occur. Leave a little bit earlier than you normally would, just in case.
- **AVOID NEGATIVITY:** When you get to school, avoid standing around with people who are going to discuss what they studied, what they think will be in the examination and what they think you should have studied. All this will do is make you lose confidence and begin to doubt your own ability which then has a negative effect when you are in the test or exam. Find a quiet place by yourself or with like-minded friends, and just read through your notes again to refresh your memory of the material. At this point in time the focus is just on familiarising your memory again with what you have studied and taking a calm and relaxed approach.



c. What could you change in your behaviour the morning of the exam?

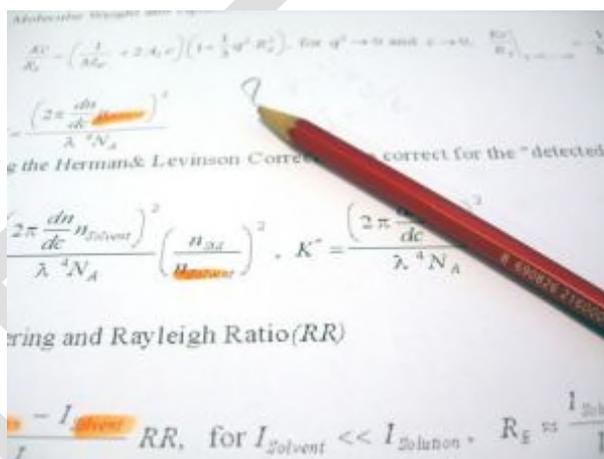
4. DURING THE TEST

Before you start writing:

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the instructions really carefully making sure you are clear about what you are expected to do. Look for any special instructions about the test.
- **PREVIEW THE EXAM PAPER:** Have a quick look through the whole paper to get a feel for the paper and an overview. This will also help you familiarise yourself with the sorts of questions on the paper so that there are no surprises. Your subconscious will start working on the questions!
- **MEMORY DUMP:** Do a quick memory dump of anything you are worried you might forget. This means as soon as you are allowed to write you quickly jot down any formulas etc. you are worried you are going to forget so they are there and ready for when you need them. But don't spend too long doing this.

During the test or exam:

- **HAVE A PLAN:** Have a plan for how you will approach the examination and use this to help manage your time during the exam (refer to the next section on managing your time for more suggestions on this area). Which questions should you do first? There are no hard and fast rules. It depends on your style. Play to your strengths and do the questions that will help you build confidence and momentum. Some people like to do the easier questions first, some like to start at the front and work straight through. Some people recommend leaving any multiple choice till last – ask your teacher what is best in their subject.
- **NOTICE HOW MUCH EACH QUESTION IS WORTH:** ‘Why do students tell their life story for a one mark question and write a couple of sentences for a five mark question?’ Teachers often lament over the number of students who take little notice of how many marks the question is worth. The marks are an important guide to not only how long you should spend on the question, but also how many points or the depth or complexity of response that is required for that question. Let the marks guide you when determining what and how much to write.
- **READ CAREFULLY:** When you are in the examination room, repeat to yourself the reminder to ‘read carefully’. Read through the instructions one by one really thinking about them. Do not assume that you know what they are going to say. Read through each question slowly and carefully; correctly interpreting the question is one of the keys to good examination marks. A good strategy is to read through the question highlighting key information, then stop and ask yourself, ‘what is this question really asking?’. If you can rephrase the question in your own words, you probably have a pretty good grasp of the question. A common error students make is to focus on one or two key words and write everything they can about a particular aspect even though it is not what the question is asking. Remember, you only get marks for answering the question, there are no marks for any extra (unnecessary) information you may provide. While answering a question, keep repeating the question to yourself and ask yourself “Am I still actually answering the question?”.



- **USE BRAINSTORMING:** When you approach an essay question, it is essential that you allow yourself a quick brainstorming minute or so just to let your mind roam and jot down as many ideas as you can. Admittedly the time for this is limited, but too many students jump straight into writing the essay without really giving their mind time to process the question and come up with ideas. A minute or so of creative thought on your part can help