

How to Write My Tests

You'll be facing three midterms and a final from me this semester. Hopefully the tips given below will help you get through the tests a little more easily than you might have otherwise. They are presented in no particular order.

- 1) **Get a good night's sleep.** Nothing helps test performance better than a clear head. This is especially important for 8:00 A.M. classes.
- 2) **Use the washroom *before* you write the test.** Nothing is worse than having to use the washroom halfway through a test, unless of course you *like* using up valuable test-writing time by doing something you could have done before the test started...
- 3) **Remember to breathe.** If at some point you get stuck during the test, do what I do: sit back, relax, stretch, breathe deeply, and stare at the ceiling for a bit.
- 4) **When in doubt, ask.** I do my very best to make the tests error-free, but it may be that, in spite of my efforts, you find a question to be poorly worded, or you might think you're missing a piece of information you need to do the question. If that's the case, *ask me*. You gain nothing by sitting in your chair fuming.
- 5) **Don't do the questions in order.** Look through the test before you start and do the questions you feel most comfortable with *first*.
- 6) **Write vital information on your test.** If there's something you think you'll need to know for the test and are likely to forget, write it on the test as soon as you get it.
- 7) **Pace yourself.** Don't spend ninety percent of your time on a question worth ten percent of the marks. To help pace yourself, take the total time (in minutes – 110 for my tests) and divide by the total marks for the test. That will give you a guide to how many minutes you should spend per mark assigned to a question. For example, if a test is out of 43 marks, then that means you should spend about 2.5 minutes per mark assigned to a question, so that you should be able to do a two mark question in five minutes or less.
- 8) **Write something for every question.** You stand a *much* higher chance of getting part marks for questions that you don't leave blank. Having said that, though, you'll only be assigned part marks if what you wrote was (part of) a correct answer to the question.
- 9) **Read the whole question.** This seems obvious, I know, but you'd be surprised how many marks students lose because they don't. Bring a highlighting pen to your tests to help you with this (highlight the actual question you have to answer).
- 10) **Write down the information given.** Filtering out the relevant words/information from the other words in the question will sometimes point you in the right direction to solving a problem. The highlighter might help here too.
- 11) **Invent answers.** Let's suppose you're facing a question that has parts a, b, c, and d. Let's further suppose that you need to use the answer from part b in part c. This is a real problem if you don't know how to do part b. If you're stuck like this, *invent a number to use in part c*. If you do part c correctly with the wrong starting number, I'll still give you full marks for part c.

I guess that's about all I can think of. I hope this helps.