

Test Taking Strategies

Tests are one of the most high-stress situations you can come across in your time at Iowa. This worksheet is designed to give you a wide range of topics to think about as you prepare for a test. This is just an overview; please see our other worksheets for a more in-depth review of these topics.

Multiple Choice Strategies

Multiple choice tests are common on campus. Use the following strategies to get an upper hand on this tricky question type.

- 1. Read the question and anticipate the answer before you look at the multiple choices.** Read the stem with all choices.
- 2. Use process of elimination.** Eliminate all responses that you know are incorrect.
- 3. Eliminate answers that are grammatically incorrect.**
- 4. Pay attention to qualifying words** like usually, and often, as they generally *could* indicate a true statement.
- 5. Pay attention to superlative words** like every, all, none, and always, as they generally *could* indicate that answers must be definite facts. This is rare in multiple choice questions.
- 6. If a word like not, never, or none is in the question, the correct answer must be a fact or absolute.** Other alternatives could be true, but are not completely correct.
- 7. Skip the questions that you are unsure of,** and return to them at the end.
- 8. Write a multiple choice study guide** to anticipate some of the possible questions and question types.
- 9. Don't "read into" the question**— take everything at face value.
- 10. Only change your answer if you feel you have a good reason**— otherwise leave it as the original selection.
- 11. Study details** such as specific dates, names, and vocabulary. Multiple choice exams require greater familiarity with precise information. Study these in advance.
- 12. If you cannot decide between two choices, choose what "feels" right.**

Creating a Quick Facts Sheet

Creating a quick facts sheet is a great way to quickly review before a test. You can review while you walk to the test, while you are on the Campus, or before you begin the test. It may include:

- Difficult vocabulary words
- Dates, names, events, and important details/ ideas
- Acronyms or pneumonics you have memorized for the test
- Anything else you found beneficial while you were studying

Memory tools to recall information

1. **Acronyms:** find a word that is made by taking the first letter(s) of main ideas or key words. For example, ARC stands for the Academic Resource Center.
2. **Chaining:** when studying ordered lists, create a story where each word or idea you have to remember is a cue to the next idea you need to recall. For example, “Before I went to the doctor to have my **cholesterol** tested, I drank a glass of milk. While doing that, I checked the **dietary fiber** and determine the **fatty acids** found in **calcium**...”
3. **Image- Name Technique:** we typically acquire information about others through association. To help you remember names, invent relationships between the name and the physical characteristics of the person. For example, “Colonel Mustard wears a yellow jacket and has a great mustache.”
4. **Use muscle memory:** act out the information you are trying to learn while you are studying. For example, if you are trying to memorize the bones in your arm, point to them while you recite them out loud.
5. **Rhymes:** use rhyming or rhythms to remember facts, figures, and dates.
6. **Make the information meaningful:** even if you feel you will never use the information you are studying, try to find a way to incorporate it into your current daily life or future profession. This will make the material easier to understand, and more **exciting** to recall on the test!

Quick tips for before and during the test

For more detailed options, please see our Test Anxiety worksheet.

- **Use positive self- talk.** Instead of saying “I can’t do this” or “I don’t know”, say “I can do this”, “I’m prepared”, or “I’m going to think through this problem and figure it out”
- **Arrive early for test.** If you arrive early, you will have time to quickly review your notes or Quick Facts Sheet. You can also choose a seat and move if you feel you will be distracted by your original seat selection.
- **Take your time.** There’s no reward for finishing first, so use as much time as you need to feel confident about your answers.
- **If you begin to feel overwhelmed,** put down your pencil, breathe in and count to 7, breathe out and count to 7.

