

Tips for Test Taking

1. **Jot it Down Quickly:** You might have made a special effort to memorize some information for the test. If you are worried you will forget, use this strategy. As soon as the testing period begins, jot the information down on the back of the test or on a piece of scratch paper. You can then stop worrying about forgetting and focus on the test.
2. **Anticipate the Answers:** Before you read the answer choices, answer the question yourself. Then read the choices. If the answer you gave is among the choices listed, it's probably correct!
3. **Master the Question:** Have you ever said, "I knew the answer, but I thought the question asked something else"? Be certain you **know** what each test question is asking. Remember to read the question at least twice before reading the answer choices. Watch for words such as **not** and **except** that affect the meaning of the question and signal that you should look for the opposite of something.
4. **Track Your Time:** Use all the time allowed for a test to avoid making errors. Use these **checkpoints** to help monitor your time: A. How many questions should you have answered when one quarter of the time is gone? B. What should the clock read when you are halfway through the questions? C. If you find yourself behind, speed up. If you are ahead, you can- and should- slow down.
5. **Study the Directions:** To follow directions correctly you have to know what the directions are. Read all test directions as if they contain the key to lifetime happiness and several years' of allowance. Then read them again. Next, study the answer sheet. How is it laid out? How are the answer choices arranged- vertically or horizontally? Be sure you know exactly what to do and how to do it before you make your first mark.
6. **Take it All In:** When you first start a test, briefly preview the test to get a mental map of your tasks: A. Know how many questions are on the test. B. Know where to stop. C. Set time checkpoints. D. Do the easy sections first; easy questions are worth the same amount of points as the hard questions.
7. **Negative Do Not Fit:** Watch for negative words in questions such as **never**, **unless**, **not**, and **except**. When a question contains one of these negative words, you should look for the answer that does not fit with the other answers.

8. **How Much Do I Write:** If an open-ended question contains one of the following terms, then students will probably need to write several sentences to provide a complete answer. -Defend, describe, explain, justify, why, or write- You can always provide drawings and sketches to enhance what you write.
9. **Significant Details:** You will often be asked to recall details from a reading passage. In such situations, read the question(s) before you read the passage. Then, when you read the passage, underline key details. Remember, the correct answer will not always precisely match the wording of the passage.
10. **In Our Own Words:** Sometimes the wording of a question might be a bit different than the language you're used to using. Read the question and then restate it in your own words to make sure you understand what is being asked.
11. **Go With Your Gut:** When taking tests, a person's first impulse about an answer is many times correct. Consider carefully before changing your answers to multiple choice or true-false questions. If you do decide to change an answer, you should do so because you are confident about the change.
12. **Master the Question #2:** To help answer questions testing reading comprehension, do the following: 1st, read the question. Next, master the questions. Then reread the selection. The answers will be clearer with a second reading. Remember, tests are not meant to trick you but to test your knowledge and ability to think clearly.
13. **Spot Those Numbers:** Have you ever said, "I got off by one number and spent most of my time fixing my answer sheet"? To help avoid this problem, do the following: 1st, each time you answer a question, match the number of the question to the numbered space on the answer sheet. 2nd, if you skip a question, leave the answer space blank. 3rd, keep a list of questions you have skipped, but not on your answer sheet. You do not want to erase any more than necessary.
14. **Rely on 50/50:** When you have no idea what an answer is, do the following to make an educated guess: read every choice carefully; eliminate the least likely choice, then the next, and so on until one answer is left; watch out for distracters-choices that are true but either too broad, too narrow, or not relevant; if more than one answer seems correct, see if "All of the above" is an option. If none of the answers seems correct, look for "None of the above."
15. **Try, Try, Try:** Keep at it. Don't give up. This sounds obvious, so why say it? You might be surprised how many students do give up! Remember, the last question is worth just as much as the first question, and the questions do not get harder as you go. If the question you just finished was really hard, an easier one is probably coming up soon. Take a deep breath and keep on slogging. Give it your all, all the way to the end.

16. **Find the Main Idea:** The main goal of a reading comprehension section is to test your understanding of a reading passage. Keep these suggestions in mind when you read a selection on a test: read the passage once to get a general overview of the topic; if you don't understand the passage at first, keep reading. Try to find the main idea; then read the questions so that you know what to look for when you reread the passage.
17. **Search for Skips and Smudges:** To avoid losing points on machine-graded tests, make sure you: did not skip any questions; provided only one answer per question; made your marks dark enough, and kept all marks neatly within the lines. Then, erase all smudges and stray pencil marks on your answer key. Cleanly erase those places where you changed your mind. Check everything. You are the only person who can!
18. **I'm Stuck:** If you come across a question that stumps you, don't get frustrated or worried. First master the question to make sure you understand what is being asked and then work through many of the strategies you already know. If you're still stuck, circle the question and go on to others. Come back to the problem question later. What if you still have no idea? Practice the 50/50 strategy and then take your best educated guess.
19. **Minutes to Go:** If you become short on time, you should quickly scan the unanswered questions to see which might be the easiest to answer. Then go with your best instincts and, starting with the easiest questions, answer as many of the remaining questions as possible.
20. **I'm Done:** Whoa! You are not finished with a test until you have checked it. First, you should look at how much time is left. Then, budgeting your time, review your answers for any careless mistakes, such as leaving a question blank or marking two answers for one question. Next, you should erase any stray marks. Finally, you should review the hardest questions. There is nothing to be gained from finishing first.