

During a Test:

Develop a set of general guidelines that you can use for all tests.

1. Read the instructions, note the test format, time limits, and choice of questions to answer.
2. Know the rules of the test: e.g., are you given partial credit for partly correct answers?
3. Budget your time. Plan time limits for each question, allowing time for review of difficult questions. Make a **mark** about half way through the test and plan to stop, take a deep breath, and collect your thoughts.
4. Answer the *easy* questions first. You'll probably get full credit for them, you'll feel confident, and you may be able to use the information from the easy items to answer the more difficult questions. Don't skip around too much, though.
5. Don't expect all the answers to jump into your head. Take a few minutes and try to "access" the material from your head. Then eliminate the obviously wrong answers, make an educated guess, and circle the question to come back to later.
6. For multiple-choice questions, read the stem of the question, cover the options, and try to answer the question in your head. Then choose the option that matches your answer. This method keeps you from being distracted by the options.

7. Don't change answers unless you get a new revelation and suddenly realize that you have just remembered vital information.
8. If there is time, reread each answer for silly mistakes. Otherwise, return only to those questions you circled for further thought.
9. If you become anxious during the test, take a deep breath, close your eyes and exhale slowly. Repeat.
10. Don't rush or compare yourself to others who may finish testing early. Students who take their time and avoid unnecessary mistakes usually earn better scores.

See the Taking Different Types of Tests brochure for information on test questions.

After a Test:

1. Don't focus on what you did or didn't do. Wait until the exam is returned and then analyze the results.
2. If you royally missed sections on your test, take steps to learn the material, as you may see that material again in a more sophisticated form on coming tests.
3. Ask for feedback. Know what you did wrong and learn from your mistakes.
4. Start studying for the next exam so you don't run out of time. This is one time management technique that better students use. The day before is too late!

Contact the OHS Student Services Department for more information: 608-783-4571 Feb 08

Preparing for Tests

Study Skills for Success



**School District of
Onalaska**

**Comprehensive
School Counseling
Program**

OHS Student Services

Onalaska High School
700 Hilltopper Place
Onalaska, WI 54650

Test Anxiety

It's normal and healthy to have some anxiety when a test is coming. If you know how to plan for tests, they won't have to be something you dread. You must be prepared.

When Should I Begin Studying?

The time to begin studying for a test is the first day of a course. Start early by reading the assignments, listening to lectures to identify main ideas, and developing organized note-taking. Make a studying schedule and stick to it so you are not left cramming at the end of the semester. When several exams or assignments are scheduled in the same week, divide the work associated with a course into small tasks that you can work through one at a time. Taking on work a chapter at a time can help you get started, see your progress, and concentrate more effectively.

Remembering Information

Succeeding on tests sometimes depends on remembering things like dates, math and science formulas, historical events, characters, and plots. There are two basic ways to memorize. One is by repetition – reading or saying something over and over until you know it “by heart.” The other way is to link new ideas to something familiar. These are called **mnemonic devices** (memory devices).

Mnemonic Devices

1. Make a **link**. Associate an unfamiliar idea with something you already know. The sillier the association, the easier it will be to remember the new idea. For example, suppose you need to remember that *prostar* is the beginning stage in the cycle of the development of a star. You might think, “This rookie is going to be a star in the pros someday,” and draw a picture of a basketball player dunking a star in a basket.
2. Make up an **acronym**. Acronyms are words made up from the initials of other words. HOMES, for example, is an acronym for the names of the Great Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior. You can form an acronym by writing the facts you need to remember, underlining the first letter of each fact, and arranging the underlined letters to form an acronym that is a real word or a nonsense word you can pronounce.
3. Make up a **saying**. Catchy sayings can stick in your mind, such as “Spring forward, fall back,” which tells you when to set the clock ahead an hour and when to turn it back for daylight savings time.
4. Make a **silly sentence**. Create a humorous sentence whose words begin with the same letters as the names of the items you're memorizing. An example would be “Every good boy does fine,” for the lines on the treble clef staff.

5. Make a **rhyme** or **song**. Rhymes such as “In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue” are easy to remember and make facts easy to remember, too.

Preparing for Tests: Some Tips Before a Test:

1. Start to study early.
2. Be alert; get plenty of sleep the day before the test.
3. Know what will be on the test and in what format (multiple choice, true false, short answer, essay).
4. Know how the test will be scored.
5. Be prepared in advance – no cramming.
6. Work on problems in a course like math right up until the exam to keep you in a math mind-set. For non-math or science courses, review only. It is too late to start to learn new material, and doing so will only add to your anxiety.
7. Make sure you have all your equipment – e.g., calculator with new batteries, sharpened pencils, notes if you are allowed to use them.
8. Remember that anxiety itself is not bad. In order to perform at your peak, you need to have an optimal level of anxiety. This is good stress.
9. Avoid study marathons by taking frequent breaks, which will help refresh you before you move on to more material.