



TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

FOR STUDENTS

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General Test-taking Tips:

- ▶ Read directions thoroughly.

If there are multiple parts or clauses in the directions circle them. Afterward go back and check to see that all parts of the directions were followed.

- ▶ Ignore people who leave early

There is little correlation between grades and time needed to take tests

- ▶ Monitor your breathing throughout the test.

If you find yourself breathing shallowly and/or quickly, make a conscious effort to deepen it and slow it down.

- ▶ Preview the test

(or the page you're on) and jot down quickly any mnemonic phrases you see you'll be needing (or at least call them up in your mind).

General Tips (cont.)

- ▶ Calculate how long each question ought to take based on the total test-time, and what question you should be on when halfway through the period. If you're behind at the midway point, speed it up a little. If stuck, mark the question and return to it later if there is time.
- ▶ Do not change an answer unless you have clear, strong and compelling reasons why you must!
- ▶ When “waffling” between two items, go with your first instinct.
- ▶ Test questions assess your understanding of specific concepts that were taught, not your common sense. Look for the answer that specifically addresses a precise concept in the material you studied.

General Tips (cont.)

- ▶ For an answer to be True, **ALL** parts of it must be true. One incorrect fact renders the entire statement false.
- ▶ Be wary of “extreme” words such as “all, none, always, never,” etc.
Little in life is absolute, except that it must eventually end
- ▶ Look for signal words in the stem:
“chiefly” “immediately after recess...” “first” “best” “Upon arriving at school”
- ▶ Be cautious with questions phrased in the negative:
 - ▶ “... which behavior management technique is **contra-indicated**” (NOT recommended)
 - ▶ “...which of the following is likely **not true** of a child at 5 years old...”

Strategies for Tests

- ▶ Every test question was written to assess your understanding of a specific concept or piece of information that the test creator believes students should know. When you read each question ask yourself what that key concept is.
- ▶ Do not read into the question any more than the words in the question provide to you. If you start saying to yourself “But what if...” you are reading too much into it.
- ▶ When all four options appear plausible look for qualifiers in the stem that narrow the choice.

Strategies for Tests (cont.)

- ▶ When all four options appear plausible look for qualifiers in the stem that narrow the choice.
- ▶ When three answers are similar and one is different the different option may be the best choice.
- ▶ Make sure that you option you select addresses **ALL** parts of the stem. If the stem has more than one clause, or part, some of the options are likely only addressing one (or some) of those parts.
- ▶ When two options are opposites one of them may be the correct answer.
- ▶ When two options seem plausible one of them will often address the stem precisely and directly, and the other more generally. Look for the precise and direct answer.

The Multiple Choice “Method”

- ▶ Do not rely on answer options to “teach” you what the correct answer is! Test questions are written in such a way as to expose test-takers who can be easily fooled by buzz words or plausible-sounding (but incorrect) answers

INSTEAD:

- ▶ Read the stem while placing your hand over the options. What is the specific subject of the question?
- ▶ What do you already know about that subject?
- ▶ What are the key and/or signal, or qualifier words? Circle them. What kind of answer are you looking for? Get as mentally firm as you can about what information you believe the correct answer should contain BEFORE looking at the options.

The Multiple Choice “Method” (cont.)

- ▶ Look at each option independently of the others and treat each one as an separate True/False statement relative to the stem. Place T? or F? beside any you're unsure of.
- ▶ Quickly dispose of obvious distractors
- ▶ When you have finished marking the options, look for any double or triple T's or F's. Does the question call for multiples (i.e. it is a multiple-multiple)? If not, look again at the signal words and key words in the stem. Which answer more specifically addresses these, and the nursing concept, ***without reading too much into it?***

Sample Question Using the Method

Ivan is a four-year old preschooler who typically sits and **plays silently**, does **not follow simple commands**, and **cannot name simple objects** in the room. Ivan is demonstrating difficulty with...

(before you look at the options, what do each of the phrases in red have in common? Try and predict what you're looking for in the answer.)

- A. Language development
- B. Physical development
- C. Social development
- D. Emotional development

If you chose A you are correct. Everything in red has to do with the ability to use language.

Stress and Test-Anxiety

- Stress “freezes” the thinking areas of the brain and inhibits thinking and memory function.
- Use humor, solid preparation, break periods, good nutrition, hydration and exercise as tools to manage your overall stress levels, which puts you in better shape for fending off test anxiety.
- Monitor your breathing during your exam. If you notice your breathing is shallow, take three, long, slow and deep breaths (the brain needs good oxygen supply to function). Repeat as needed.