



Texas Woman's University
Counseling
Center

Presents

Studying for and Taking Tests



First, How Will You Be Tested?

- Before you start to study, you need to know what kind of test you are going to take:
 - Objective tests – multiple choice, True/False, fill-in-the blank, short answer, matching, etc.
 - Subjective test – essays – compare and contrast, explain connections, describe a timeline, etc.
 - Concept Learning tests – math story problems, manipulating concepts, etc.

Cramming Doesn't Work!



- One major key to academic success is to study a little new each day and review what you have already covered.
- This will make you feel like you know the material better so that you can organize it the way you need to when it comes time to prepare for the test.

Studying for Objective Tests #1

- After you have actually read all the materials and notes at least twice,
 - Create a series of notes that help you link important pieces of information because objective tests, in general, ask you to match things.



Studying for Objective Tests #2

- Many people find creating study aids like flash cards help in this process
 - Front = 1492, Back = Columbus sailed the ocean blue
 - Front = drooling dogs, back = Pavlov rings the bell
- This method can be used for any subject
 - Experiment with what works best for you.

Studying for Essay Exams #1

- Essay exams ask you to tell stories and pull relevant bits of information together
 - Define, compare and contrast, put information in an historical context or timeline



Studying for Essay Exams #2

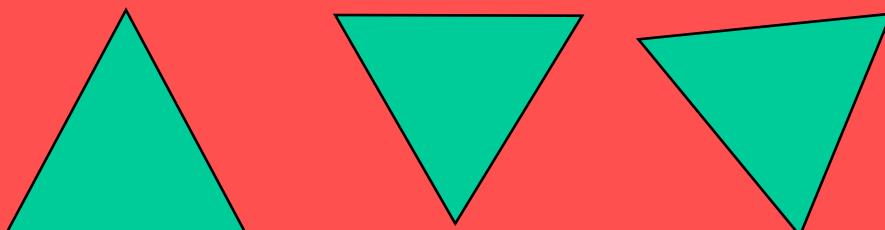
- Look for themes in the materials you read
- Check lecture notes to see what's been emphasized – these often become topics for essay questions
- Ask yourself the kinds of questions the instructor might ask on the test and begin organizing information based on those categories

Studying for Concept Learning Tests #1

- Instructors will ask you to demonstrate your understanding of concepts by asking you to manipulate them
 - You will be taught: $a+b=c$
 - The test question will ask you to explain: $b=c-a$

Concept Learning Tests #2

- After learning the concepts, you must be able to ask yourself,
 - “What does it look like from a variety of different angles?” or
 - “How do all the components relate to each other?”

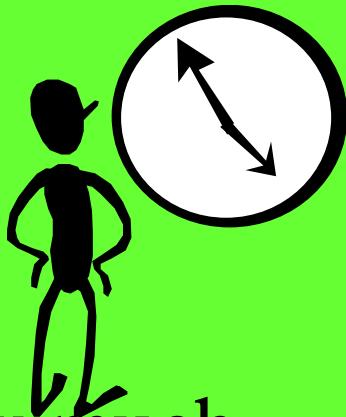


Quick Recap

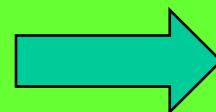
- So, you are reading a little each day and reviewing previous reading and notes
- You have organized the material as the test gets closer
- You have begun to study the material the way in which you will be tested



Studying for the Test



- Well in advance, begin to decide how much time you will need to study for a particular exam.
 - Create a time plan with specific times you will study
 - Also leave time for other important tasks you may need to do
 - This will help you decide whether you will study by cramming or by review over time



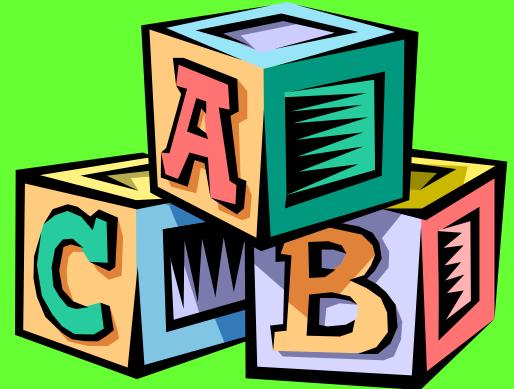
Cramming



- Plusses:
 - Allows you to “cram” the amount of time you would spend over a number of days into a smaller time period
 - Is often best used with multiple choice exams (if you’re going to use it)
- Minuses:
 - Long-term memory of information is poor at best – so if you have a cumulative test at the end of a semester, you won’t remember much from the first test

Reading and Reviewing Over Time

- Plusses:
 - Increases mastery of material
 - Most useful for long-term retention of information
- Minuses
 - Requires more discipline and breaking larger tasks into smaller parts
 - Can't procrastinate



Other Study Aides

- Besides studying by yourself, you can
 - 1. Get a “study buddy” – to study with
 - Pick someone who gets good grades
 - 2. Create or join a study group
 - OR...



Believe it or Not...

- You can make an appointment to meet with your professor during office hours
 - Timed so that you have already studied a good bit, but a few days before the test
 - Make a list of all the topics you have studied
 - Ask the professor to review the list and give feedback about its completeness
 - Then, go study what the professor suggests
 - But...

- NEVER EVER

- Ask what will be on the test
- Ask if there's anything that is unimportant and that you don't need to study
- Go to meet the professor without first having prepared and having made a list of that which you have studied



Taking the Test

OK, so you've studied and prepared and it's time to take the test.

Here are some suggestions that can help you increase your performance:



Test Taking Tip #1

- Go to bed at a reasonable hour the night before the exam. Being awake and alert is the first key to optimizing your performance.
 - Being tired makes it harder to do well



Test Taking Tip #2

- In order to get to bed, don't drink or take caffeine the night before
 - Large amounts of caffeine will make you feel awake –
 - But it will also make you feel jittery and make it difficult to relax and sleep



Test Taking Tip #3

- Some students find it useful to have time before the test to review the material
 - This isn't cramming, it's just polishing
 - Don't rush this – only study what you have time for in a relaxed way
 - This will help keep you calm and better able to perform.



Testing Taking Tip #4

- Dress for Success
 - Some students like to dress “up” when they take tests
 - Others like to wear “comfortable” clothes.
 - Choose to wear what will make you feel best.





Test Taking Tip #5

Don't freak yourself out!

- There's a whole on-line presentation about anxiety management if you need it...
- Repeating negative ideas reduces performance
 - “I can't do it.”, “This will be awful.”
- Repeating positive ideas increases performance
 - “I have prepared the best I can.”, “I will do my best.”



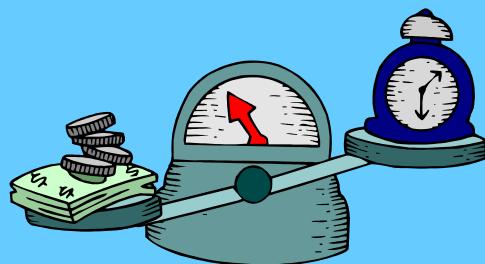
Test Taking Tip #6

- **RELAX!!!!!!**
 - Here's an easy thing to do
 - Take a deep breath, hold it for just a moment, then let it out slowly
 - Repeat this 4 or 5 more times
 - Being relaxed increases your performance



Test Taking Tip #7

- Get ready to answer questions by
 - Reading the instructions completely to understand what you are being asked to do
 - If questions are weighted, plan your time so that you spend the most times on the questions worth the most points



Test Taking Tip #8

- Start Answering Questions
 - Unless otherwise instructed, you probably don't necessarily need to answer question #1 first.
 - Instead, start with a question you feel very confident about answering (If that happens to be question #1, that's OK) and continue through the test by answering those questions you feel most confident about. Then go back to the beginning, answering those you are less confident about, etc.
 - Answering questions you feel confident about helps you to relax and remember more.

Test Taking Tip #9

- Guessing
 - What are the rules for guessing?
 - If there is no penalty for a wrong answer, always guess at something.
 - If there is a penalty for guessing (on multiple choice), if you can eliminate 2 of 4 answers, your odds improve from 1:4 to 1:2 and you should guess.
 - If you can't eliminate some answers, leave the item blank.



Test Taking Tip #10

- **RELAX!!!!**
 - If you feel yourself getting tense, take a moment to relax – do the breathing thing...then go back to work



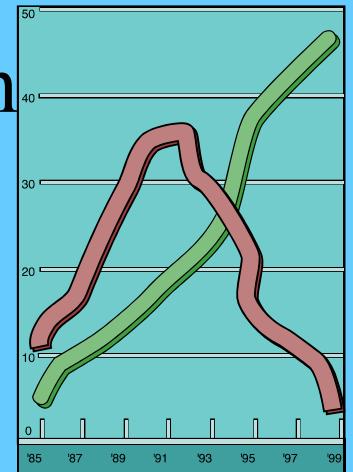
Test Taking Tip #11

- Should I change my answer?
 - The best person to answer this is you
 - Think about how you've done in the past and whether changing answers has been helpful or not
 - If changing tends to increase your score, change your answer
 - If your first response is often the right one, stick with it unless you have a good reason to change.



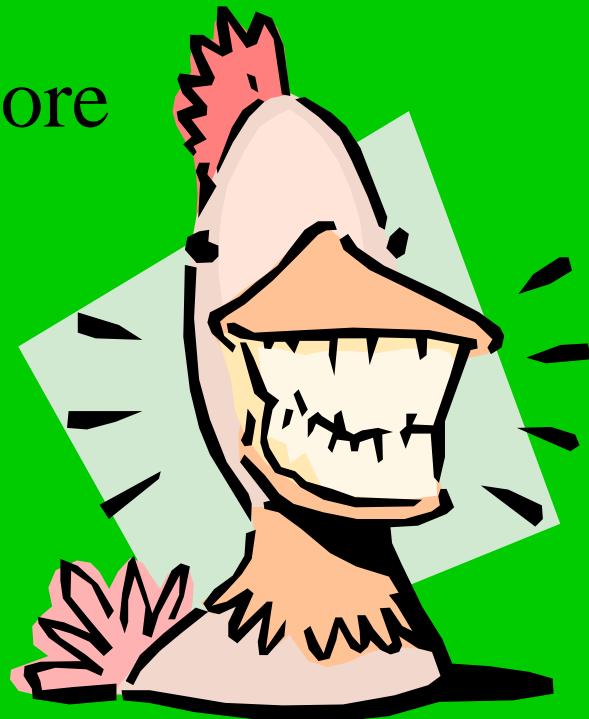
Test Taking Tip #12

- Don't worry about what others are doing
 - You may be the first one in class who finishes
 - You may be the last one in class to finish
 - You may be in the middle
- There's no correlation between when someone finishes a test and grades



After the Test

- Do something nice for yourself just because you did the best you could
- Don't over-predict your score



When You Get the Test Back

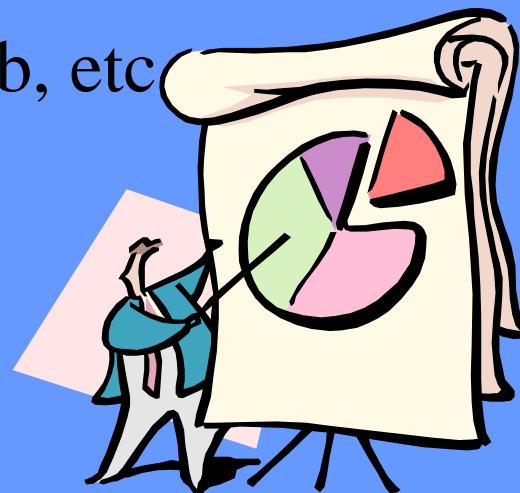
- If you did well, don't attribute it just to luck.
- If you did poorly
 - Meet with your professor after you have reviewed the test and get feedback
 - The professor has the most experience understanding what went wrong
 - Get suggestions on how to do better next time

Incorporate What You've Learned about Test Taking

- Whether you did well or poorly, incorporate what you learned and the feedback you've received to make a plan for how to study and take the next exam.
 - Remember, if you did poorly, doing the same thing again the next time will probably get you the same results!

General Services to Help You

- Your professor is your first, best resource to help you with content.
- Departments often offer tutoring
- Labs for specific skills may be available
 - Math Lab, Writing Lab, Science Lab, etc



Services At TWU

Disability Support Services	dss@twu.edu	940-898-3835
Math & Technology Assistance		940-898-2169
Science Learning Assistance		940-898-2553
Write Site Writing Center		940-898-2341



Counseling Resources for Studying and Test Taking

Currently enrolled campus-based TWU Students may call or stop by the Counseling Center for an appointment.
Counseling is free and confidential.

Denton:	West Jones Hall	940-898-3801
Dallas:	Parkland, Room 120	214-689-6655
Dallas:	Presbyterian, Room 16	214-706-2416
Houston:	6700 Fannin, Suite 2250	713-794-2059

TWU Counseling Center Resources

- Visit any of the TWU Counseling Center waiting areas to pick up handouts about study skills, test taking, and other topics of interest.
- Denton: West Jones Hall
- Dallas: Parkland Room 120, Presbyterian Room 16
- Houston: 6700 Fannin, Suite 2250
- Some handouts are also available on our web site at:
<http://www.twu.edu/counseling/self-help-library.asp>.
- Other materials are available on-line at the Counseling Center web site: <http://www.twu.edu/counseling>

Informational Resources for Time Management

- On the Web, visit the Virtual Pamphlet Collection at <http://www.dr-bob.org/vpc>. This web site contains handouts and pamphlets, created by university counseling centers across the country, on a variety of topics including stress and stress management.

Credits and Disclaimers

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Ph.D., Former Director, Texas Woman's
University Counseling Center.

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