

Strategies for Taking Online Tests for Students

Whether this is your first online test or your 30th, it's important to be aware of best test taking strategies and how to prepare a good test taking environment. Below you will find tips for how to prepare before your test, things to keep in mind as you take your test, and suggestions for after you have finished.

Before the Test

- **Read and understand the test guidelines:** What is the who, what, when, where, and how of the exam? Be sure to pay special attention to test dates, times, and time limits. If the test is available for a few hours or days, make sure to plan a time that works best for you.
- **Know the test format:** What kinds of questions will the instructor use on the exam—multiple-choice, fill-in, short answer, essay? Perhaps a combination of various types?
- **Study for the test:** Even if the test is “open book,” it’s still important to study and review just as if you were taking the test in a classroom. You will most likely have limited time, so you still need to know the material. If practice tests are available from the instructor or the textbook, use them to study.
- **Check your computer:** Make sure your computer is charged, working, and has any necessary software downloaded. Make sure that your Wi-Fi connection is available. Have a backup internet plan if possible.
- **Create a quiet place to take the test with minimal distractions:** Turn off all distractions, TV, phone, email, and all notifications. Let your roommates or family know that you’ll be taking a test, so that they’re less likely to interrupt you during that time.
- **Gather allowable testing materials:** If you can, make sure to have notes, books, or writing supplies prepared and near.
- **Take a deep breath:** When it’s time to start, a deep breath helps release tension and promotes relaxation.

During the Test

- **Keep an eye on the clock:** Know how much time you are allowed and keep track. Set alarms or timers if helpful.
- **Don’t leave the test page:** If you can use outside sources, use a different browser or tab than your test so that you don’t accidentally lose your work.
- **Technical problems:** Don’t panic. Take a screen shot and contact your instructor immediately. Don’t wait. You can also contact DoIT technical support at 803-777-1800.
- **Re-read directions and word problems:** Take time to understand the question or problem and each of the possible answers (for multiple choice) to make sure that you understand the details and have the full information.
- **Condense the content:** Look for keywords and try to rephrase complicated questions in your own words to make sure you are getting to the essence of the question.
- **Don’t try collaborative cheating: Do not share answers with peers or use test sharing sites.** Instructors can use Blackboard to look for patterns and to check essays for plagiarism.
- **Check your work before you submit it:** Make sure that answers recorded in the test are what you intended them to be. Make sure no question is left blank. Proofread any written work.
- **Click submit:** Make sure to submit your test when you are finished. Only click the submit button once.

After the Test

- **Reflect on your performance:** How do *you* believe you did? What questions did you find confusing? Did you have to skip anything? See if you can find the answers to the questions that you found challenging. What could you do differently next time?
- **Check your grade:** Even if your grade is available immediately, make sure to come back to review the full exam and any missed questions, as well as any instructor feedback.
- **Request Feedback:** Make sure to review the provided instructor feedback. If you have any additional questions or concerns, be sure to contact the professor. You can email them or set up an appointment, even in a fully asynchronous online course. Discussing results can help you learn the material more deeply and help you better prepare for the next test.

Adapted From:

The Best Schools: "Online Exam Tips You'll be Thankful For"

ECPI University: "How Online Exams Work: How to Be Successful in Online Test Taking"

Tulane University: "Test Taking Tips for Online Learners"

Watkins, Ryan and Corry, Michael. 2014. *E-Learning Companion: A Student's Guide to Online Success*. 4th ed. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning on Cengage.com

Western Governors University: "Five test-taking tips for online college students"

"7 Ways to Assess Students Online and Minimize Cheating." Darby, Flowers, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*