

# Parents' CLIPBOARD

SECONDARY LEVEL

BY THE PARENTS &amp; READING COMMITTEE OF THE COLORADO COUNCIL, INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION

## Test Taking

Students face heavier testing demands as they progress through school, and whether we like it or not, agree or disagree, quizzes and exams are a prominent feature of the secondary classroom. In general, the proportion of a student's grade that is derived from test scores increases from 57% in middle school to 72% in senior high. (Putnam, 1992) This increase in testing, in turn, causes an array of responses among students, ranging from apathy to near panic. "In the majority of classrooms no single task raises as much anxiety, stress, and general concern as does the taking of an exam or test." (Wood, 1995) However, test taking does not have to be a stressful experience if students keep a few tips in mind.

### Before Taking a Test

1. Ask the instructor the following questions:
  - A. *What type of questions will be on the test?*  
**Recognition (multiple choice, true/false, matching)**  
 These kinds of questions provide all of the relevant information. The student is required to identify the correct answer from a selection of available choices.  
**Recall (essay, short answer, fill in the blank)**  
 These questions require the student to generate information in the absence of any cues.
  - B. *How much time will be allotted for the exam?*
  - C. *What percentage of the semester grade will it be?*
  - D. *What materials will be needed for the exam?*
2. Prepare master summary sheets.
  - A. Collect materials from textbooks, class notes, study guides, previous exams.
  - B. **Selectively highlight** the important information.
  - C. **Recopy** the important information and **organize the material** into related groups for easier memorization. (For optimum recall, groups should have no more than 7 items.)
  - D. **Anticipate probable questions** and prepare outlines for answers, especially if the test is going to be an essay.
  - E. **Review the material** on master summary sheets each night until all information is memorized.
  - F. **Over-learn the information.** Over-learning is continuing to study the material after learning the information well enough to just barely recall it. Experts suggest that after students can say, "I have learned the material," they should spend additional time memorizing the information. Students who over-learn the material will reduce test anxiety and remember four times as much after 28 days have passed.

### During the Test

1. Students should look through the entire test first and read directions carefully.
2. Answer the questions they know first, then go back and answer the ones they don't know.
3. If taking an essay exam:
  - a. Plan/outline thinking first.
  - b. Do not spend much time on the introduction; spend most of the time discussing main points and supporting details.
  - c. Summarize points at the end of the essay as part of the conclusion
  - d. Do not save the best points for last. State them first in case time runs out.

### After the Test

1. Students should look through the test and make sure it has been scored correctly.
2. Record the questions that they missed and analyze why they missed the questions they did.
3. Write down the correct answers and place in study materials.



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