STRATEGIC TEST-TAKING: BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE EXAM

Getting A’s on exams is rarely due to luck. Achieving good grades takes long-term planning, preparation, discipline and practice. Here are some basic strategies for better test performance. Try them out!

Before the Exam:
• Know what the exam will cover. Collect study materials, such as class notes, old exams, the study guide.
• Allow enough time, preferably a week, to review your study materials and to create study tools.
• In general, students perform better on exams if they prepare as if it were an essay exam.
• For better memory recall, get a good night’s rest the night before; avoid marathon or all-night study sessions.
• Don’t forget to eat! Include proteins and avoid excessive amounts of sugar and caffeine.
• Be confident in your ability to do well! Use positive self-talk.
• Practice relaxation techniques in advance (such as deep breathing or guided imagery) if you are prone to test anxiety.
• In the lines below and later in the page, write in some practices that we did not mention!

During the Exam:
• Ignore or avoid other test-takers; their anxiety might be contagious.
• Sit in your usual seat, if possible, but sit where you can avoid distractions, such as people leaving.
• Bring all necessary materials, i.e., pencils, pens, a watch, calculator, scratch paper, blue book, etc.
• Know exactly how long you have to complete the exam.
• Listen carefully to any verbal instructions.
• When you are given the test, take a deep breath, RELAX and read the directions carefully.
• Review the entire test before starting to answer any questions.
• Set up a schedule and budget your time. Be aware of how many points each answer is worth.
• Answer the easiest questions first.
• Change your answer only if you’re absolutely sure that your second choice is correct.

After the Exam:
• Review the exam and count the points. Could the TA or grader have made a calculating error?
• Identify if you missed questions because you couldn’t remember it during the test, if it was something you had never studied, or if it was a careless error such as a misplaced decimal.
• Analyze the test-taking strategies you used. What worked? What did not? Did you start preparing early enough, or could you have started studying for the exam earlier?
• Use this information to decide how you’ll approach your next exam.
• Be kind to yourself and give yourself credit for what you did right!