

# **Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes**

Workbook

## **Workbook Intro**

Welcome to “Studying, Taking Tests, and Learning from Mistakes.”

Topics: effective studying for different test types, study aid development, strategies for effectively writing online or in-person tests, and post-test reflection and learning.

This workbook is intended to provide additional resources to those utilized in the online learning module and will provide key definitions, an overview of concepts and skills, as well as space to practice new techniques.

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## **Reflection**

We need to adjust our exam preparation strategies to get ready for different kinds of tests.

One of the keys to successful test taking is to practice in the form in which you'll be tested. So, if you are getting ready for a multiple choice test, can you find practice questions in your course notes or textbook or try to make some up? Or, to get ready for an essay exam, can you find a potential question in your materials or invent one in order to practice outlining answers?

## Self-Reflection

Are there any kinds of tests/exams you feel most confident taking?

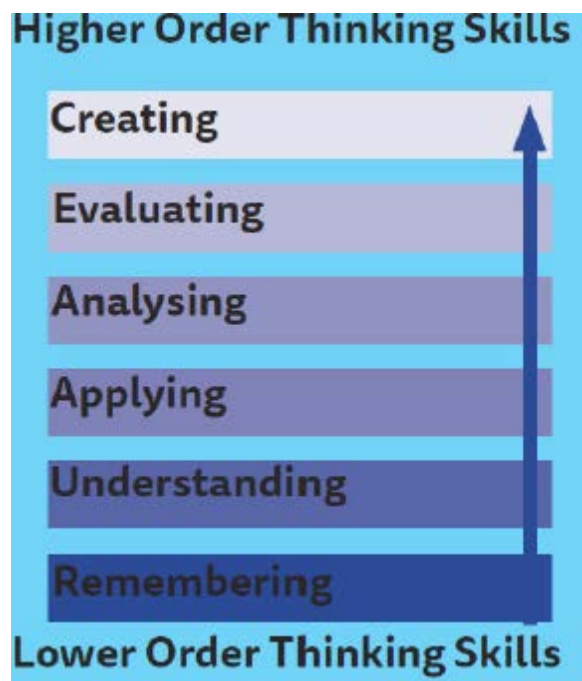
Why?

What kinds of tests/exams questions do you find most challenging?

Why?

Objective tests like true/false, multiple choice and fill in the blank are looking for short factual answers. Subjective test like short answer or essay writing, are looking for responses that include detailed and developed ideas.

Regardless of which type of test you are preparing for, it is important to study deeply, in order to be ready for any type of question.



For instance, if students study to only remember and repeat definitions, they may struggle to answer a test question checking to see if they can apply a concept.

For each course concept, try to study to remember, understand by explaining in your own words, apply by thinking of an example, etc.

## **Study Aid Development**

Connecting what we're learning to prior knowledge or our own experience helps us to retain new information.

Take your course textbook or another important reading and turn to a page recently covered in the course.

Take some time to brainstorm any connections you can find between your life and the topic.

Use the space below to record the concepts and the connections you have made to your life, other course material or content from other courses.



# Activities

## Mnemonic Devices

Mnemonic devices are strategies to help us remember information. Jennifer McCabe's research has demonstrated that when students create their own acronyms, acrostics, jingles, images, or examples, they remember what they are learning better.

Here is an example of an Acronym/Acrostic:

**H= Huron**

**O= Ontario**

**M= Michigan**

**E= Erie**

HOME is a great way to use mnemonic devices as a way to remember the names of the Great Lakes.

For your course, try to come up with a few mnemonic devices for your course concepts.

Acronym:

Acrostic:

## **Information Gathering**

Being ready for test taking requires 2 skill sets: information gathering and information using.

Identify all of the various sources of information you want to gather to be prepared to study (e.g. syllabus, textbooks, etc.).

Identify all of the ways you can use information to study (e.g. practice questions, mnemonic devices, etc.)

## **Budgeting Time: Test Taking**

According to Carolynn H. Hooper's "Practicing College Study Skills", one of the most important test taking strategies is being aware of how you budget your time during a test.

Sometimes during a test or exam, you may know the correct answer but be rushed for time, resulting in careless mistakes. If you want to get the highest grade for the time spent test writing, it's important to think about how to budget your time according to the tests you are taking.

How much time would you leave for the following?:

Total time for a test: 2 hours

Time allowed for preview:

Time allowed for review:

2 essays (20 points each):

25 multiple-choice questions (1 point each):

15 matching questions (1 point each):

20 true/false questions (1 point each):

## Budgeting Time: Test Taking

Why did you organize your time that way?

Things to consider:

- Always try to allocate time to preview and review your test. Subtract this time from the total time of the test/exam.
- Calculate the point value of each question as a percentage of the whole exam or test.
- Hooper explains, you should try to calculate the percentage of the "base time" (or time remaining once you've subtracted time for preview and review) that you should allow for each question or set of questions. If a question counts for 30 percent of a test, multiply  $.30$  (percent)  $\times$  50 (base time).
- Always try to use the full time allotted to write your test or exam.

## Strategies for Multiple Choice

### Cover up alternatives

- This ensures that you're focusing on the stem of the question.

### Read the stem

- Read the stem for initial understanding
- Underline keywords; note limiting terms such as "always," "never," "only," etc.
- Ask yourself, "What is the question really asking?"

### Predict the answer

- Predict the answer before reading the answer options
- Ask, "What do I remember about this concept?"
- Remembering the concept and recalling details can limit confusion and doubt once you see the answer options

### Consider all of the options

- Don't select the first option that sounds good, because there could be combination options (see below)

### Check the format

- Take note of combination answers. Is it possible that more than one answer choice is correct? For example, "Both a) and b)" or "All of the above" might be options

### Process the options

- Read the alternatives for meaning, not recognition. Think of each alternative as a true/false statement and respond to each; for example, "I think this is true," "I'm sure this is false," "I don't know whether this is true or false," etc.

### Identify the answer

- Put a dot or mark beside questions or answers that you are unsure about so that you remember to come back to them
- If you don't know the correct answer right away, cross out the options you know are incorrect and then make an educated guess.



## Checklist

### Essay Tests

If you have taken the time to create and answer a potential essay test question while studying for your test or exam, use this checklist as a guide to evaluate your answer to an essay question:

- Do I actually understand what the question is asking me?
- Does the first sentence of my answer re-establish the question and clearly show the reader how I am going to develop my answer?
- Have I planned out my major points?
- Do these major points stand out in my answer?
- Have I supported my major points with facts and examples?
- Have I included clear transitions from point to point?
- Would someone who's never taken this class before being able to understand what I've written?
- Did I stick to the question?
- Have I written a summary statement that concludes my essay?
- If time permits, have I proofread for spelling errors, fragmented sentences, run-on sentences, comma splices, subject/verb or pronoun/antecedent agreement errors, and any other errors that might prevent the reader from understanding what I have written?
- Could a reader understand my handwriting, and have I left enough space for comments or additions by double spacing?

## **Learning from Mistakes**

Regardless of the type of test or exam you have written, each likely requires a different type of remedy. Deciding you did not study enough, and deciding to study more next time, is not always a solution to doing better next time. It's important to consider what went wrong, and determine how you can study differently, or whether you should change the way you write your tests or exams. It's important to review your test and look over the errors you made in order to learn from them.

## **Test Correction Activity**

Use the chart on the next page to complete your test corrections and reflection. The following choices can be used as your prompts in reflection when completing the chart. You can pick more than one if needed.

1. I read the question incorrectly.
2. I misread the answer I selected.
3. I did not read all the available choices (for multiple choice questions only).
4. I did not study this particular topic enough.
5. I need to put more detail into my answer.
6. I need to write my answer in a complete sentence.
7. I did not understand what the question was asking.
8. Other... (If you choose this selection, you must include a detailed written response explaining why you answered the question incorrectly.)

Problem Number	Question/Answer  Rewrite the problem you answered incorrectly with the CORRECT ANSWER.	Student Reflection  Think about why you answered the question incorrectly. Select a reflection choice that identifies why you got the problem wrong.

## **Post Test Reflection**

When did you start studying for the test?

What did you do to study for the test?

What could you have done differently?

# Workbook Wrap Up

## **Key Terms**

### **Absolute Qualifiers:**

A word or phrase that is added to another word to intensify its meaning, leaving no room for uncertainty. For example, "It is absolutely true that using effective study strategies improves academic performance." Other examples of absolute qualifiers include: will, all, every, never, always, certainly, impossible, etc.

### **Bloom's Taxonomy:**

A classification system that distinguishes between higher order thinking skills and lower order thinking skills. It is based on the belief that students learn best when they are engaged in higher order thinking skills, such as: applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating. Students can use these skills by trying different study strategies, such as making connections between course content and explaining content in their own words.

### **General Qualifiers:**

A word or phrase that is added to another word to modify its meaning, acknowledging the limits of an argument or claim. For example, "It is frequently true that using effective study strategies improves academic performance." Other examples of general qualifiers include: often, many, few, may, might, could, usually, sometimes, commonly, probably, etc.

### **Objective Tests:**

A test that usually involves short, factual questions that can be quickly and objectively graded with the use of a standardized grading key. For example, a multiple choice test.

**Stem:**

A term that refers to the lead-in statement of a question on a multiple-choice exam; essentially the question itself. The stem should be read and understood completely in order to select the most appropriate answer from the options provided. It can be helpful to underline key words in the stem, while also paying attention to any absolute or general qualifiers.

**Subjective Tests:**

A test that, rather than using a standardized grading key, is evaluated based on the opinion of the grader. For example, an essay question on a final exam.

**Study Tools:**

Tools that students can develop and use to help improve understanding and recall of course concepts

## **Further Reading**

How to Succeed at University- Canadian Edition

By Danton O'Day and Aldona Budniak

Studying in College; Succeed in College With These Study Techniques for Test-Taking, Essay Writing, Online Courses, Individual Learning Styles and More

By Dorothy R. Tomita

Test Taking: Strategies for Everyone- Learn the simple techniques that will allow you to improve your test taking ability and improve your grades today!

By Vernon Macdonald

How to Study Effectively: Increasing Power with these Proven Techniques for Studying Success

By Kayla J. Bevan