Test Taking Strategies

DETER

D = Directions and Data Dump

- Read the test directions very carefully. Make sure you understand what your professor is looking for.
- DATA DUMP: write down all ideas, formulas, equations, etc. on your test/scratch paper
  - Helps decrease confusion
  - Allows you to keep track of all information

E = Examine

- Examine the entire test to survey the structure of the exam.

T = Time

- Once you have examined the entire test, decide how much time you will spend on each item. If there are different points for items, plan to spend the most time on the items that count for the most points. Planning your time is especially important for essay tests where you must avoid spending so much time on one item that you have little time left for other test items.

E = Easiest

- Triage! Answer the questions you find easiest first.
- Skip hard/uncertain questions.
- It's ok to go OUT of order. Answer the questions that you are most confident about early and often. This will save you time for the harder, more complex questions.

R = Review

- If you have planned your time correctly, you will have time to review your answers and make them as complete and accurate as possible.
- Also make sure to review the test directions to be certain you have answered all items required.

Different Kind of Exam Questions

Multiple Choice (including T/F and matching) – Objective Questions

- Mentally answer before looking at options
- Read ALL options
- There is not always a perfect answer – what is the BEST answer?
- Cross out/eliminate answers you know CANNOT be correct – don't look for the right answer right away.
- Be wary of minor wording changes, answers that seem similar
- Testing attention to detail vs. what you know
- Don't change your answer!
- Be wary of absolutes (all, always, no, never, none, everyone, best)

Essay Questions

- Memory/data dump
- Read the WHOLE prompt, circling key questions and significant words
- Brief outline: response, thesis, key points/evidence
- Directly answer the question in your first statement
- Answer the question
- Articulate details
- Provide specific examples and/or evidence
- Review
- SLAM
    - Sound argument
    - Length sufficient
    - Answers the prompt
    - Mechanics (proofread!)

Problem-Solving (Math, Physics, etc.)

- DATA DUMP FIRST
    - Equations, formulas, key terms, etc.
- Read
    - What is the question asking?
    - What formula/equation are you using?
- Solve
    - What is given? What do you need to find?
    - Don't skip any steps
- Apply (if Multiple Choice)
    - Apply your answer back to the original question. Does it make sense?
- SHOW ALL YOUR WORK