



Strat-O-Grams

A newsletter of research-based strategies for
Belton School District students, teachers and parents

Learning and Using Test Taking Skills

Topics

Test Taking Review and Preparation

General Guidelines

Essay Questions

Essay Vocabulary

Short Answer

Objective Tests:

- Multiple Choice
- Matching

True/False

PIRATES



Why do we take tests? It shows how much you know, how much you don't know, what you should know, where you made mistakes, where you need help, how you are improving, and it gives practice for the next test. To be well prepared a student should:

- Review all of the material studied
- Think about what will likely be on the test
- Study information you are not sure of
- Make and study summary notes
- Think about your teacher's test-making habits so you can predict what the test will be like
- Make sample questions
- Think "I can do well on this test"
- Have all materials needed on test day
- Get a good night's sleep and eat breakfast

Relax, be confident, you are prepared!

Plan your studying and organize the material you will need to learn and review for the test.

The week before the test you should:

- 1st night- overview of all the material to be covered on the test
- 2nd night- study first 1/3 of the material
- 3rd night- study second 1/3 of the material
- 4th night- study final 1/3 of the material
- 5th night- careful review of all material studied
- 6th day- take the test

On the test day, be there! It is harder to do a make-up test than to take the test on the planned day. Your attitude is very important, so be confident that you have studied and you will do your best. Pay attention to all directions and follow them exactly as given, if you are unsure ask the teacher what is meant. Skim the entire test and budget your time for each section. Don't spend too much time on any one question or section because you can always come back to it. Proof read your test before you hand it in, have you answered all questions? Is your name on the test?



Essay tests requires a student to recall and discuss in an organized manner the main ideas and relevant details of a subject that has been studied. These tests are usually made up of discussion questions and/or short answer questions which require either a few sentences, paragraphs, or list of things. When taking an essay test you should:

1. Read the directions for the entire test and follow them exactly as written.
2. Determine which questions you will answer (if you have a choice).
3. Plan your time. You need to finish all required questions.
4. Allot a certain amount of time to each question. Stick to your schedule.
5. Look for key words.
 - a. Compare- list qualities or characteristics that resemble each other.
 - b. Contrast- list dissimilarities, differences, or unlikeness of things, qualities, events, or problems.
 - c. Compare and Contrast- tell how things are alike and different.
 - d. Criticize- discuss the merit of truth of the factors or views mentioned. Give reasons for your viewpoint on each item discussed.
 - e. Define- give concise, clear meanings. Don't give details. Show how the thing you are defining differs from things in other classes or give examples.
 - f. Describe- tell what the item looks like or how an event happened.
 - g. Diagram- draw and label or explain in full detail.
 - h. Evaluate- carefully describe the problem listing both advantages and limitations. Emphasize the evaluation or authorities as well as your personal evaluation.
 - i. Explain- clarify or interpret the material or idea presented. Give reasons for results and causes.
 - j. Illustrate- draw and label or retell with supporting facts and details.
 - k. Justify- give reasons for decisions or conclusions
 - l. List- write an itemized series of events, ideas, people, etc.
 - m. Outline- organize material under main points and subordinate points.
 - n. Prove- give factual evidence or logical reasons to show that something is true.
 - o. Relate- show how things are connected with each other or how one causes another.
 - p. Review- briefly summarize or restate ideas; then criticize and analyze their importance.
 - q. State- present the main points in brief, clear language, usually omitting details, illustrations, or examples.
 - r. Summarize- retell in your own words.
 - s. Trace- retell in your own words in a step by step manner.
 - t. Be explicit. Be precise. It is more difficult to write a good short answer than a long ineffective one...and the teacher can quickly spot answers that are "padded" with irrelevant information.
 - u. Plan your answer before you begin to write. Don't be tempted to skip this step, it will actually save you time.
 - v. Use an effective opening sentence, restating part of the question if necessary. Avoid starting with "It is ..." or "It is because..."
 - w. Be neat and write legibly. A teacher cannot give credit if they can't read it. Neater papers can receive higher grades. Use good spelling, punctuation and grammar. Allow time to proof read. But, don't change the content of any question unless you are 100% of the new idea. Your first response is usually the best response.



Objective tests have answers that are clearly right or wrong and can use an answer key for grading. Some general guidelines include reading the directions carefully and paying special attention to any oral directions that may give different or further directions. Look over the entire test before beginning so you can plan your time, do what you **know** first because there may be clues within the test for other questions. Do not read anything into or out of a test, accept them at face value. Watch for double negatives because they can change the meaning of what is said. Try to supply your own answer before you read the choices and guess... unless there is a severe penalty. The following techniques should help with each type of objective test that you may take.

Multiple-Choice Tests:

1. Narrow your choices to two, by ruling out the unlikely or incorrect answers.
2. Look for repetition in words that mean the same thing in both the stem of the question and in one of the answer choices. That choice will probably be correct.
3. Rule out answer choices with contain absolute qualifiers such as 'always', 'never', 'must', 'only', etc.
4. Remember that longer, more precise answers are usually correct.
5. If two answer choices are basically the same, rule them both out.
6. Pay attention to grammatical inconsistencies between the question stem and the answer choices. (e.g., one countries, a animal)

If two answers are opposite, one of them is probably the correct answer.

Fill-In-The-Blank:

1. Write down your best guess if you cannot remember the exact answer...you may get partial credit.

If the question is vague, write down how you interpret the question and then your answer. ("assuming you are asking...", "understanding the question to mean...")

True-False:

1. Absolute qualifiers tend to make a statement false since there are usually exceptions. Examples of absolute qualifiers include always, never, only, none, without exception, totally, etc.
2. Moderate qualifiers tend to make a statement true. Example are usually, generally, some, etc.
3. Assume that a statement is true unless you have reason to believe otherwise. False items are usually more difficult to write.

Remember that if any part of a statement is false...the whole statement is false.

Matching:

1. Read the entire choice column to see what the possibilities are.
2. Draw a line through each choice as it is used (if only used one time).
3. Fill in the matches that you are sure of first.

Fill in all remaining items.

PIRATES test taking strategy:

P= Prepare to succeed

P= put your name and PIRATES on the test

A= allot time and order to each section

S= say affirmations (“I am a successful test-taker when I use PIRATES”)

S= start within two minutes

I= Inspect the instructions

R= Read instructions carefully

U= Underline what to do and where/How to respond

N= Notice special requirements

R= Read, remember, reduce

R= Read the whole question

R= Remember what you studied

R= Reduce the choices

A= Answer or abandon

Answer the question

Abandon the question and come back to it later

T= Turn back

When you are done, turn back and answer all abandoned questions

E= Estimate

A= Avoid absolutes (all, always, every, no, none, never, only)

C= Choose the longest or most detailed choice

E= Eliminate similar choices

S= Survey

Survey to ensure all questions are answered

Switch an answer only if you're sure



Sources:

Plano, Texas Strategy handbook

KU

KU Special Connections

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