Tips to Improve Test Performance

Improving Retention and Building Knowledge

1. Develop analogies and mnemonic devices to remember long or difficult processes/concepts. (visual + auditory)
2. Read the information from the textbook, but make sure to read difficult passages out loud. (visual + auditory)
3. Quiz yourself. Using notecards, write questions on one side and the answer on the other. Hear yourself asking the question and hear yourself saying the answer. (visual + kinesthetic + auditory)
4. Highlight, define, and write 1-3 sentence summaries, applications, examples, scenarios, and/or analogies in the margins. (visual + kinesthetic)
5. Go from solitary studying to group studying. Ask questions and explain answers. Cross reference students’ answers. Be skeptical of their answers/explanations. (visual + auditory + kinesthetic)
6. Repeat and demonstrate what you learned to others, anyone who will listen! (auditory + kinesthetic)
7. After an instructor explains and concept, say, “So __________ means that __________? Am I correct?” Put it into your own words.
8. Learn something in several different ways: 1) read about the subject, 2) watch a video of the subject being explained or demonstrated, 3) work with a hands-on object, 4) view an application of the subject or process AND apply the subject matter or process yourself! 5) ask instructor if your application was correct.
9. Take breaks. 50 min on, 15 min off. And do something physical during the break!
10. Make multiple associations with the subject material. Move around different places in the library. Don’t sit in one space for too long.

Improving English Skills and Reading Comprehension

1. Read difficult passages out loud.
2. Underline unfamiliar words, look them up, and write the definition above the word. Read the sentence again.
3. Use new words in your writing as well as in conversation.
4. Write short summaries of a difficult paragraph in the margins of the text.
5. Write out scientific terms and practice pronouncing them.

Improving Time Management

1. Always look ahead. Think about what exams are coming up, and which ones require more study than others.
2. Learn how to say no. It will empower you and allow you to devote the amount of time you need to study for an exam.
3. Perform an informal assessment to determine how much time you should devote to each chapter. Use your notes, quiz scores, and feedback from your instructor to decide what should be a priority.
4. Don’t study what you already know. Don’t feel the need to always “start at the beginning.”
5. Eat the elephant piece by piece, or you will end up cramming.
Reducing Exam Panic

Before the Test
1. Eat a protein and a starch that morning.
2. Study to APPLY the knowledge using analogies. When you create analogies, you can be more comfortable with the material.
3. Ask yourself, “Could I teach this to someone else?”
4. Sleep!
5. Filter out pre-test conversation. Students may spread misinformation: “I read Chapter 7 because I think questions will be on Chapter 7 even though we weren’t assigned to read Chapter 7.” This will cause you to panic before the test because you didn’t read Chapter 7.

During the Test
1. Skip unfamiliar questions for the moment and return to them later.
2. Don’t go back to change answers unless you have a LOGICAL reason for doing so.
3. Think of your favorite place.
4. Employ breathing techniques.
5. Use self-coaching phrases: “You can do this.” “I studied this.” “I’m sure this will be come back to me later on.”

After the Test
1. Tell yourself what you did correctly.
2. Accept the test for what it is, but don’t make it out to be bigger than what it is.

Improving Exam Skills
1. Preview the test.
2. Create a quick “memory lot” on the test or on scratch paper.
3. Read directions carefully.
4. Answer the easiest and shortest questions first.
5. Eliminate at least two choices first.
6. Reword the question being careful not to change the meaning of question.
7. Use existing/prior knowledge/logic to arrive at an answer.
8. Retrieve information from different mental sources. (Most often, students try to only visualize their textbook.)
9. Refer to other questions to jog your memory.
10. Review your test, but only to look for silly mistakes or “for sure” wrong answers.