How to Prepare for a Test

10 Tried-and-True Tips

Hardly anyone likes tests, but everyone has to take them.
Here's how to make sure you're ready to do your best at test-taking time.

1. Before you leave the classroom, be sure you have asked questions about any words or ideas you don't completely understand.

2. Before you leave school, be sure you have all the materials you need to study for the test: your book, your notes, any extra material the teacher has given you, the homework hotline number or website address, and so on. (What else do you need?)

3. At home, find a quiet spot to do your studying. If it helps you concentrate, play soothing music at a very low volume while you study. Don't take phone calls, answer email, watch TV, play computer games, check social media, or text anyone. Just study.

4. Take time to review the content you have been learning, and use the typography of any text, such as headings, italics, bold print, or color, to help you notice important information. If you took notes, review those, too.

5. Take notes while you study. Use graphic organizers, different colors, mnemonics, or anything else that will help you remember the material.

6. Practice sample problems or exercises.

7. If you study with someone else, leave some time to review the material again by yourself.

8. Before you go to bed, put all the things you need to bring to school tomorrow in one place. (In your backpack? On the kitchen table? Next to the door?) Be sure that you have pencils or pens for the test. Is there anything else you will need? What about books? A calculator? A handheld device? What else? Have everything ready.

9. Go to sleep at a reasonable time.

10. Set your alarm so you wake up early enough to get ready without hurrying before you leave. If you don't usually eat breakfast, take a snack bar along with you unless the school provides snacks.

Bonus: Quick Tips for Test Time

- When you get the test, take three deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth, which increases your blood oxygen level. Each time you exhale, think silently, "I'm ready for this test. I prepared for it, and I will do well."

- On the back of your paper (or on a piece of scratch paper), quickly write down anything you think you'll need for the test. Jot down key ideas, dates, vocabulary words, and names.

Sketch simple maps, vocabulary maps, or graphic organizers you have used for studying. Fill in a few details as you remember them.

- Skim the whole test. Then go back and complete the easier items first.

- As you work through the rest of the test, never spend more than two minutes on one item if it doesn't make sense to you or if it seems very hard. Make a mark in the margin so you can come back to that item if you have enough time.