

HOW TO STUDY FOR A TEST

Student/Class Goal

Test anxiety interferes with student's success when they return to class. They want to learn some strategies to be successful when taking tests.

Outcome *(lesson objective)*

Students will write about how to study for a test and create a class test taking manual. They can also choose to write GED questions to become more familiar with test questions.

Time Frame

3-4 hours

Standard *Convey Ideas in Writing*

NRS EFL 2-5

Prewriting	Benchmarks	Drafting	Benchmarks	Editing and Revising	Benchmarks
Topic, purpose, & audience	3.1, 4.1, 5.1	Organize writing	3.10, 4.11, 5.11	Reread & revise	2.18, 3.18, 4.19, 5.17
Writing for purpose	3.2, 4.2, 5.2	Sentences/paragraphs	2.11, 3.11, 4.12, 5.12	Proofread	
Writing for various tasks		Descriptive language		Feedback from others	2.20, 3.20, 4.21
Generate ideas	3.4, 4.4, 5.4	Sentence structure	3.13, 4.14, 5.14	Checklists & rubrics	
Main idea/thesis	3.5, 4.5, 5.5	Spelling	4.15, 5.15, 6.13	Publishing	Benchmarks
Research		Punctuation		Technology	
Plagiarism		Capitalization		Publication	
Sources		Parts of speech	2.17, 3.17, 4.18, 5.16		
Organize ideas	4.9, 5.9				
Organizational pattern	3.9, 4.10, 5.10				

Materials

A Test Taking Self-Analysis Key for Multiple Choice Tests Handout
Test Strategies Resource Packet
Test Packet
The Expository Mode of Writing Information Packet

Learner Prior Knowledge

Students will develop an appreciation of the value of assessments and testing by developing a mind map with the key question: *Who benefits from testing and assessment?* Some programs may choose to administer the TABE Locator at this point.

Instructional Activities

Step 1 - Lead a discussion asking various questions: What has been your experience with testing? (*Student responses will range from good to bad experiences.*) Whatever our experiences have been is testing important? (*Student should acknowledge the importance of testing.*) Why is it important? (*Student responses will vary. Write the responses on the board.*) What is hardest for you when you take a test? (*I don't understand the questions. They ask about things I've never heard of before, etc.*)

TEACHER NOTE Weave these points into the discussion above. Most people do not like to take tests. Tests don't always show exactly what we know, but they are used as a yardstick to measure performance. The good news is that we can become better at test-taking skills. There are many factors that can hinder your performance on a test. These may include: not being familiar with the format of the test, being afraid, not understanding the questions or the directions, not knowing what to look at on the page, and not seeing the value of the test.

Create a prompt on test anxiety for their journal writing, such as "Think about a time in the past when you took a test and felt particularly anxious. What were some of the reasons for your anxiety? Describe the situation." Return to this prompt at lesson completion to reflect on how to be successful as a test taker. You might want to ask "What have you learned about test taking strategies that will now help you when you take your next test?"

Step 2 - If you have given the TABE Locator (GED Practice Test or other multiple choice quiz) to the group previously, make sure everyone has the correct answers. Give students *A Test Taking Self-Analysis Key for Multiple Choice Tests* handout and have them use the self-analysis to figure out why they missed the questions they missed. Also, when students have identified the 'traps' they fall into, it would be good to have some conversations about how to solve these problems.

Step 3 - There are several types of questions on various tests they will be taking while in the ABLE classroom. Let's look at various guidelines to help answer those questions.

TEACHER NOTE Teacher preference will govern this lesson as you may choose to provide the information as a handout or you may decide to create a PowerPoint using the information found in the *Test Strategies Resource Packet*. Classroom resources on test taking strategies can also be incorporated into this lesson. A sample of each kind of question should be shared as well as each test containing test-specific questions. A separate lesson on scoring and writing essays might be used after this lesson.

- 1. Multiple-Choice Questions.** These questions require you to select one answer from several possibilities.
- 2. True-False Questions.** The statement must be 100% true in order to be marked "true," not 50% true or even 99%. This could be the difference of just one word, so read carefully.
- 3. Sentence Completion or Fill-in-the-Blank Questions.** Read the sentence with each of the choices then select the one that makes the most sense.
- 4. Matching Questions.** Match terms that have a common meaning.
- 5. Essay Questions.** Write about a particular topic or question.

Students will want to practice their test taking strategies using the various tests found in the *Test Packet*. Give them an opportunity to discuss how they did with each test and why or why not they were successful. Refer back to the above guidelines for reinforcement.

Step 4 - Have students look at how other test taking books are organized and decide how they would like to organize the class test taking manual.

TEACHER NOTE *The Expository Mode of Writing* Information Packet gives an explanation and considerations when beginning this writing assignment.

Have the students make an outline or use a graphic organizer to reflect their decision. Students can then choose information to fill in each of the areas they have chosen for their manual *Preparation for a Successful Exam Day*. The group can choose a format (poster, Power Point, booklet, etc.) for their manual and make assignments as appropriate.

Step 5 - Practice writing GED questions with students. Use [Beginning with the Learners' Lives: Creating GED-Type Questions](#) as a resource for the group on how to begin the writing process. GED-type questions can be written with any future topics of study students choose to pursue.

Assessment/Evidence *(based on outcome)*

Discussion and observation
Journal entry
Multiple-choice self-analysis
Test results from each test-type
Class test taking manual
GED questions

Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation

Not yet completed.

Next Steps

Continue with a lesson on writing and scoring a GED essay.

Technology Integration-

Test Taking Strategies Quizzes <http://www.byu.edu/cc/learning/strategy.php>
Test Taking Strategies <http://www.southwestern.edu/academic/acser-skills-teststr.html>
Testing, Testing 123 http://jc-schools.net/tutorials/test-strategies.ppt#256,1,Slide_1

Beginning with the Learners' Lives: Creating GED-Type Questions http://eff.cls.utk.edu/toolkit/support_classroom_clippings.htm

Purposeful/Transparent

While in the ABLE classroom, students will be preparing for the GED test by taking various kinds of tests. This lesson identifies the important strategies students will need to master when taking tests.

Contextual

Using tests and test models, students will practice the strategies they are learning.

Building Expertise

Students are writing about test taking anxieties they have when they come into the ABLE classroom and then are reflecting on the strategies they have learned and will use when they take tests in the future.

A TEST TAKING SELF-ANALYSIS KEY FOR MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS

Adapted from <http://www.southwestern.edu/academic/acser-skills-teststr.html>

If you don't do well on multiple choice tests, it's important to find out why. Read the following statements and mark the ones that apply to you. It is important to identify the problem area before you can work to improve your test-taking skills.

_____ **Information Gap:** I did not know the information.

_____ **Retention Gap:** I knew the information but couldn't remember it.

_____ **Misinterpretation of Information:** I remembered the information wrong.

_____ **Synthesis Gap:** I did not make connections between pieces of information.

_____ **General Vocabulary Gap:** I did not know the correct meaning of general vocabulary.

_____ **Course Specific Vocabulary Gap:** I did not know the meaning of a specialized term.

_____ **Inability to Decipher:** I thought sentence structure was confusing.

_____ **Jumping to Conclusions:** I did not fully consider all the responses.

_____ **Rushed Response:** I did not have time to consider the question carefully.

_____ **Over/Under Generalization:** I eliminated too much or did not eliminate enough.

_____ **Misreading:** I made decoding errors in reading the question or response.

_____ **Mis-keying:** I knew the correct answer but copied the wrong response on the answer sheet.

_____ **Test Answers Not Checked:** I didn't use extra test time to review my answers.

GUIDELINES FOR ANSWERING MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

All of these hints work best when used together. It is important to note that nothing will help you do better than studying for a test.

1. **Formulate your own answer before reading the options.**
 - Focus on finding an answer without the help of the alternatives.
 - This process will increase your concentration.
 - Doing this will help you exercise your memory.
2. **Eliminate obviously wrong answers first.**
 - Eliminating two alternatives quickly may increase your probability to 50/50 or better.
 - Use the true-false methods described here and find the false alternative.
3. **Select numbered answers from the middle range, not the extremes.**
 - For example, if the height of a mountain is requested, eliminate 20,000 feet (high), and 3,000 feet (low). Then choose between 8,000 feet and 11,000 feet.
4. **Select answers that are longer and more descriptive.**
 - Longer (true) answers stand out and contain more detail.
 - Shorter (false) answers are created quickly as throw-aways.
 - Descriptive detail is given to help you identify the truth.
5. **Similar answers give you a clue! One of them is correct, the other is disguised.**
 - Reject answers that use specific determiners such as: everyone, always, never, etc.
 - Look for grammatical inconsistencies which may help eliminate wrong answers.
 - Choose answers which use qualifying terms such as: often, most, etc.
 - Choose the answer which first caught your eye.
 - Do not be afraid to change an answer if you feel strongly about it.
 - Do not be discouraged if you cannot answer a question. Leave it and go on.
6. **Watch out for "NOT TRUE?"**
 - Remember to reverse your procedure and eliminate truth.
 - Beware of questions with "no", "not", and "none." These words easily change the meaning of questions.

Multiple Choice Quiz Answers

1. C
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. A
6. B
7. A
8. A
9. C
10. B

GUIDELINES FOR ANSWERING TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

- 1. When you do not know the answer. Mark it true!**
 - There are generally more true questions on true-false exams than false questions.
 - Instructors find it difficult to make a false statement look true.
 - Specific detail in the statement may also tend to make it true. For example, the statement "Babe Ruth hit 60 home runs in one season" has specific detail and is more likely to be true.
- 2. Look for any factor that will make a statement false.**
 - It is easy for the instructor to add a false part to an otherwise true statement.
 - Students often read the question and see some truth and quickly assume that the entire statement is true. For example, "Water boils at 212 degrees in Denver." Water does boil at 212 degrees, but not at Denver's altitude.
- 3. Look for extreme modifiers that tend to make the question false.**
 - Extreme modifiers, such as always, all, never, or only make it more likely that the question is false. Here is a more complete list of EXTREME MODIFIERS:
all none best absolutely always never worst absolutely not
only nobody everybody certainly invariably no one everyone certainly
not
- 4. Qualifying words tend to make a question true.**
 - Qualifiers (seldom, often, many) increase the likelihood that the statement is true. Here is a more complete list of QUALIFIERS:
usually frequently often sometimes some seldom many much
probably a majority apt to most might a few may unlikely
- 5. Negative words or prefixes complicate the statement.**
 - The prefixes (un-, im-, mis-) will alter the meaning of the statement.
 - Double negatives make a positive. For example "not uncommon" actually means common.
 - If the question contains negatives, as "no, not, cannot" Drop the negative and read what remains. Decide whether that sentence is true or false. If it is true, it's opposite, or negative, is usually false
- 6. Questions that state a reason tend to be false.**
 - Words in the statement that cause justification or reason (since, because, when, if) tend to make the statement false.
 - Pay close attention, the reason that is given may be incorrect or incomplete.

True-False Quiz Answers

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. F
5. T
6. F
7. T
8. T
9. T
10. F

GUIDELINES FOR ANSWERING SENTENCE COMPLETION OR FILL-IN-THE-BLANK QUESTIONS

1. **Concentrate on the number of blanks in the sentence and the length of the space.** The test maker is giving you clues to the answer by adding spaces and making them longer.
2. **Provide a descriptive answer when you can not think of the exact word or words.** The instructor will often reward your effort with partial credit.
3. **Sentence Completion Questions.**
 - Use your initial survey of the test to determine how much time to spend on each response. Also consider how much space is provided and how many points the question is worth.
 - Short answer responses require no introduction and should be brief and to the point.
 - Do not fall into the trap of elaborating on a short answer question because you feel confident of your response. Answer succinctly and continue onward.

Fill in the Blank Quiz Answers

1. Question
2. Number
3. Word
4. Guess
5. Elimination
6. Middle
7. Question
8. Steady Pace
9. Knowledge
10. Learn

GUIDELINES FOR ANSWERING MATCHING QUESTIONS

1. **Examine both lists to determine the types of items and their relationships.**
 - Remember the test maker may be testing to see if you have mastered terms.
 - Look completely through both lists to become familiar, build your confidence, and enhance your memory of key words or phrases.
2. **Use one list as a starting point and go through the second list to find a match.**
 - This process organizes your thinking and promotes memory.
 - As you become familiar with the second list, you will be able to go straight to a match that you saw when looking through the lists a previous time.
3. **Move through the entire list before selecting a match because a more correct answer may follow.**
4. **Cross off items on the second list when you are certain that you have a match.**
5. **Do not guess until all absolute matches have been made because you will likely eliminate an answer that could be used for a later choice.**

Matching Quiz Answers

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. F
5. E
6. A
7. D
8. C
9. A
10. B

GUIDELINES FOR ANSWERING ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Read all the questions before beginning.

- Begin by answering the easiest question. This will lessen frustration and build confidence.
- Jot down ideas which immediately come to mind, especially those with specific vocabulary.

2. Organize your thoughts before you begin to write.

- A short outline on a separate piece of paper will improve your answer.
- Write the topics and the key introductory words.

3. Paraphrase the original question to form your introductory statement.

- This process helps you get the question straight in your mind.
- Restating the question allows the teacher to see how you understood the question. Perhaps you understood it to mean something other than the teacher intended.

4. Use the principles of English composition

- Form a clear thesis statement (statement of purpose) and place it as near to the beginning as possible.
- Provide clear explanations to back up the main concept.
- Remember, a complete answer usually has a main idea, supporting details and illustrative examples.

5. Write clearly! Teachers need to be able to read it.

- Making teachers work hard to read lowers your grade.
- Write or print clearly, using a dark-colored erasable ball point pen.
- Avoid crossing out words or sentences, and don't smudge your paper.
- Remember to save some space for a brief but adequate summary.

6. Use lists or bullets wherever possible.

- Numbers or bullets allow the teachers to easily see your points.
- Never burry your lists or key points in the middle of a paragraph.
- If you must use a long paragraph, underline your key points.

7. Be sure to keep track of time.

- Spend more time on questions which are worth more points.
- Before turning your test in, read your answers a final time in order to check for grammatical errors and misspellings.

Words to watch for in Essay Questions

The following words are commonly found in essay test questions. Understanding them is essential to success on such questions. If you want to do well on essay tests, then study this page thoroughly. Know these words backward and forward. To heighten your awareness of them, underline the words when you see them in a test question.

Analyze: Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.

Explain: Make an idea clear. Show logically how a concept is developed. Give the reasons for an event.

Compare: Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences.

Illustrate: Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.

Contrast: Show differences. Set in opposition.

Interpret: Comment upon, give examples, describe relationships. Explain the meaning. Describe, then evaluate.

Criticize: Make judgments. Evaluate comparative worth. Criticism often involves analysis.

Outline: Describe main ideas, characteristics, or events. (Does not necessarily mean "write a Roman numeral/letter outline.")

Define: Give the meaning; usually a meaning specific to the course or subject. Determine the precise limits of the term to be defined. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually short.

Describe: Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities, and parts.

Discuss: Consider and debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Write about and conflict. Compare and contrast.

Summarize: Give a brief, condensed account. Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.

Trace: Show the order of events or progress of a subject or event.

Prove: Support with facts (especially facts presented in class or in the test.)

Relate: Show the connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.

State: Explain precisely.

Enumerate: List several ideas, aspects, events, things, qualities, reasons, etc.

Evaluate: Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the evaluation.

TEACHER NOTE You may want to omit the parts pertaining to essay writing at this time and continue with a separate lesson on Writing and Scoring Essays next.

Multiple Choice Quiz Choose the answer that completes the question most accurately, and circle the answer.

1. The right answers in multiple choice questions tend to be:
 - A. short
 - B. at least a paragraph long
 - C. longer and more descriptive
2. When guessing on a multiple choice question with numbers in the answer:
 - A. always pick the most extreme
 - B. pick answers in the middle range
 - C. skip it
3. What is the process of elimination in a multiple choice question:
 - A. skipping the entire question
 - B. eliminating the wrong answers
 - C. just guessing
4. What section should you do last when taking a test:
 - A. the easiest
 - B. the last part of the test
 - C. the most difficult because you have already completed the objective questions
5. What should you not do when taking a multiple choice test:
 - A. pay attention to patterns
 - B. read each question carefully
 - C. read all choices
6. How could one concentrate more on the question:
 - A. think about it for a long time
 - B. try to find the answer without looking at the alternatives first
 - C. don't concentrate--it doesn't help
7. What is a good method for guessing:
 - A. use the process of elimination
 - B. always pick "c"
 - C. look at your friends paper
8. What should you not do when taking a test:
 - A. answer the questions as fast as possible
 - B. read each question carefully
 - C. don't listen to last minute instructions
9. What is good advice when doing matching questions:
 - A. go through the entire list before you start matching
 - B. do not guess until all absolute matches have been made
 - C. all of the above
10. What should you rely on when taking a test:
 - A. your neighbor
 - B. your knowledge
 - C. nothing

True or False Quiz

1. You should relax and arrive early when taking a test.
2. With true or false questions, the questions are generally true.
3. No one should keep a steady pace when taking a test.
4. Amount of sleep never affects how you'll do on a test.
5. With any extra time, you should review your answers.
6. You should never waste time reading the directions.
7. There is no substitute for the truth.
8. Negative words sometimes affect the truth.
9. It is smart to state a reason why the question would be false.
10. You should never pay attention to qualifiers that will make the question true.

Your Answer	
T	F

Fill in the Blank Quiz

When doing fill in the blank questions, read the _____ with the intent to give an answer.

Always concentrate on the _____ of blanks to fill in.

When you don't know the exact _____, provide a descriptive answer.

Do not _____ until absolute matches have been made with matching questions.

Use the process of _____ when you do not know the answer.

Choose the _____ range and not the extremes.

Read the _____ carefully, looking for any answer to make it false.

Keep a _____ when taking tests.

Rely on your _____ and don't watch for patterns.

_____ from your test!

Matching Quiz

Choices

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. _____ Memorizing facts or recalling information | |
| 2. _____ Telling in own words | |
| 3. _____ Solve a problem in a given situation | A. Evaluation |
| 4. _____ Break into parts and identify relationships | B. Knowledge |
| 5. _____ Bring concepts together and rearrange into creative new ideas | C. Comprehension |
| 6. _____ Make value judgments and give reasons to support it | D. Application |
| 7. _____ Apply | E. Synthesis |
| 8. _____ Explain | F. Analysis |
| 9. _____ Critique | |
| 10. _____ List | |

PREPARATION FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXAM DAY

1. Gathering knowledge of the truth is the best preparation for tests.

- Concentrated hours of effective study to force facts into your memory is the best way to prepare for any test.
- However, teachers often try to test your memory of the material by slightly altering it. In this case, practice and some test-taking skill will help.

2. Maintain a healthy lifestyle.

- Arrive well-rested from a good night's sleep.
- Eat well. Watch your caffeine and junk food intake. Small, frequent high protein meals will energize you.

3. Always arrive early and take a moment to relax and reduce your anxiety.

- This brief time period will boost your confidence
- Use this time to focus your mind and think positive thoughts.

4. Listen attentively to last minute instructions given by the instructor.

- Teachers often last minute changes.
- Missing instruction causes extreme anxiety.
- Ask which test format will be used for this test.

5. Read the test directions very carefully and watch for details.

- You may find that more than one answer may be possible on multiple choice.
- A key detail may require only three out of the five essay questions.

6. Plan how you will use the allotted time.

- Estimate how many minutes you will need to finish each test section.
- Determine a pace which will ensure completing the whole test on time.
- Start with the easiest section to build your confidence.

7. Maintain a positive attitude.

- Don't let more difficult questions raise your anxiety and steal your valuable time. Move on and find success with other questions.
- If you are not penalized for wrong answers, guess and move on.
- Avoid watching for patterns. Noticing that the last four answers are "c" is not a good reason to stop, go back, and break concentration.

8. Analyze test information

- Read the information and break it down into parts.
- Look for ideas that are similar and restated throughout the passage.
- Look for information that is compared or contrasted and as "What is the author saying? Why is it important?"
- Sometimes lots of information is presented, but it's not important in answering the question.

9. Rely on your first impressions.

- The answer which comes to mind first is often correct.
- Nervously reviewing questions and changing answers can do more harm than good.

10. Plan to finish early and have time for review.

- Return to difficult questions you marked for review.
- Proofread your essays and pay attention to grammar and spelling.
- Make sure you answered all questions. More than one student has failed to notice questions on the back side of the paper.

11. Consider every test a practice session - analyze your performance.

- Test taking is an art which needs refinement. One can not refine the art without practice and serious evaluation.
- Go through each test thoroughly and see if your plan worked.
- Look at each section to identify your fault patterns. Do you need to work on true/false, multiple choice, or essay?
- Talk to teachers regarding low scores, especially on essays.

Sample Manual

Expository Mode of Writing Information Packet

Explanation	Considerations
<p>Expository texts make up the bulk of what adults read and include essays, speeches, lab procedures, journals, government documents, newspaper and magazine articles, business writing, research papers and directions. These texts provide information and explain definition, sequence, categorization, comparison-contrast, enumeration, process, problem-solution, description, or cause-effect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Developed with facts and statistics, examples, cause and effect, and definitionso Informs or amplifies understanding by giving key points, explanations, and supportive detailso Usually unemotional and written in the third persono Orientation with who, where, when, what, whyo Events in time ordero Concluding statement or endingo Logical organization with detailed descriptions and accurate definitionso Knowledgeable voiceo Identified audienceo Precise vocabulary, visuals support text, linking wordso Sequential steps with examples and details