

Ten Tips to Prepare for a Test

based upon Paul Nolting's "Winning at Math"

- 1) **Do the Homework.** Getting ready for a test requires continuously practicing your skills (i.e., Doing your homework). It is important to do all of your homework both online and/or book assignments and not to get behind on it. DO NOT CRAM! It is important to understand concepts by working lots of examples and not by memorizing solutions.
- 2) **Know Your Materials.** Be sure you know what type of materials you will be allowed to use for the test, including knowing how to use the same type of calculator you will be allowed for the test. If your instructor offers a review/tutoring session, be sure to attend it. Keep in mind, your instructor will not allow you to use the calculator on your cell phone during the test.
- 3) **Formulate a Game Plan.** At least four days prior to the test, you will need to determine what topics the test will cover and find specific problems of varying difficulty to match those topics. Make a plan for studying for the test. It is best to organize your time into several 30–45 minute blocks of time distributed throughout each day. Be active in your study group.
- 4) **Make Additional Note Cards.** Expand your stack of note cards made while doing your homework to include any missing topic/definition/concept.
- 5) **Build your mental note card.** Make a mental note card of all the important formulas, procedures for working problems, important facts, etc. you will need to know for the test.
- 6) **Mix it Up.** Be sure you can work problems with varying degree of difficulty in different orders. If your teacher gives you a review and/or practice test, be sure to complete those at least a couple days in advance of the test so you get help on the problems that you get wrong.
- 7) **Simulate the Testing Environment.** A couple days before the test, take a practice test under the same conditions that you will take your regular test. (Timed, no book and no notes, appropriate calculator). It is important for you to find out what you do not know before the test.
- 8) **The Night Before.** Review only the material you have already learned. This is not the time to learn new material. Review your notes to ensure you understand the concepts. Work a few problems and go through your mental note card right before you go to bed and then go directly to bed. This will allow you mind to continue to process and remember the material.
- 9) **Game Day Preparations.** Be sure to get plenty of sleep the night before the test and eat an adequate amount of food before the test. Do not consume more caffeine than you normally do. In the morning, review your notes and your mental note card. Do you have pencils, erasers, & scratch paper? Does your calculator work?
- 10) **Plan to Arrive Early.** Being early for a test will allow you to get your test taking material ready and will maximize the amount of time you have to take the test. Arriving late on the other hand is disruptive to the other students and makes it hard to focus on the test. This will make you more nervous during the test. Also, arriving late gives you less time to complete the test and to review your test for errors.