“Forbidden Psychological Test Taking Tactics”

Mental Strategies and Techniques to Win the Psychological Battle of Your Test Before Walking Into the Exam Room

By Teaching Solutions

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# Forbidden Psychological Test Taking Tactics

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INTRODUCTION

Do You Have a Test Plan?

You wouldn’t send an army into battle without a plan. You wouldn’t begin a football game without a plan. You wouldn’t embark on a critical business trip without a plan. You wouldn’t begin a long vacation without a plan. Would you walk into a room and take a high-stakes test without a plan? You’d be surprised at how many people do. Don’t!

A good test preparation plan can mean the difference between passing the first time and having to do it all over again. Don’t make the mistake made by so many who fail—make a plan, stick to it, and pass your test with flying colors.

This book is focused, not on the test content itself, but on the days ahead of the test. The days you have to study, work, eat, sleep, do chores and all the other things that are a part of your daily life. The world doesn’t stop or rearrange itself just because you have a big test coming up. You have to rearrange your own life to be able to devote the time needed to accomplish your goal.

“Days” ahead of the test? More like “weeks” or even “months.” That’s right. Sure, some people are experts in their test content and can breeze through the test no problem. Then again, even the expert test taker is up against a time limit, and that time limit may come back to haunt her. If you’re like most people, you have some background in your test subject. For example, you may be a retired engineer who is going into teaching math. On the other hand, you may be a lab assistant that just completed your degree and have decided to be a science teacher. You have the course work and some experience behind you, but when was the last time you had to apply all that knowledge to a topical test that could ask you just about anything related to the test subject matter? Most people will need some review and brushing up before a big exam, and this book is for that person.

This book is not a content review—you’ll have to use other resources for that. However, if you follow the advice presented here, your content review will be more effective, thorough, and rewarding.

We begin by assuming you have eight weeks to prepare for your exam. You might be able to prepare in less time, but why risk it? That is how much time it’s going to take to evaluate what you need to study and have sufficient time to practice, review and retain the needed knowledge. You are going to have to read, write, take notes, answer practice questions, take practice tests, go to the library, and look things up on the internet. It’s actually a lot of fun if you like learning; if you’re in a hurry—it’s a nightmare.

The basic outline of the planning and preparation process presented here is shown in figure 1. There’s no time like the present, so let’s get started.
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Figure 1. The Teaching Solutions Forbidden Test Taking Tactics at a glance
Eight Weeks Before Testing Day

Develop a Leader’s State of Mind

Great leaders in business, politics, and on the battlefield don’t rely on physical skill and mental acuity alone. They have a psychological state that gives them an advantage over the competition. You should use the same mental approaches when it comes to taking your exam. Here’s how they do it.

1) Work Hard. Seems obvious doesn’t it? It’s at the top of the list because this is one thing all successful people have in common. They work hard—really hard. Luck has little or nothing to do with success. To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, “The harder you work, the luckier you get.” So if you think that passing your exam is going to be easy; that you won’t have to put in the necessary prep time; that passing is simply a matter of luck—get that out of your mind right now. Accept the challenge and plan accordingly.

![Figure 2. It takes hard work. Don’t think otherwise!](image)

2) Keep it Real. By this we mean to set reasonable goals and expectations. Sure, it’s possible to ace the test. Possible?—Yes. Probable?—Definitely not. But that’s okay. You don’t need to ace it to pass. All you have to do in fact is pass—no more, but certainly no less. Bearing this in mind you don’t have to beat your self up if one or two subject areas on the test give you trouble. Study those areas hard (see number 1 above!) and do your best on them. That will be good enough because there are other areas in which you excel and you’ll pick up lots of points there.
3) **Visualize Test Success.** Nearly all successful people, from athletes, to card sharks, to sales people, use the power of positive mental thinking to improve their motivation. When motivation goes up, desired results follow. As you prepare for your exam, take time each day to picture yourself reaping the rewards of passing. Imagine your self in the classroom on the first day of school after you earning your teaching certificate. Make a picture in your mind of you working a new job that you will get after getting your GED. Image yourself making an important discovery in the lab after you are accepted into graduate school. How about driving along a beach road in a Ferrari after you have become a successful lawyer of doctor? Use mental pictures like these to keep you motivated and to propel you through the hard times. Picture yourself in the test room answering the questions quickly and confidently. By the way, all these images are more likely to come true if you **work hard** (see number 1 above!)
1) First, get a copy of the test description provided by the testing company. These are usually offered in PDF format at the test website.

2) Next, find the section in the description document that lists the competencies tested on the exam. This will usually consist of a series of bulleted lists that give specific information about what is covered. Most test content descriptions will have a number of main headings. Taking a math test as an example, some common topic sections include Number Sense, Geometry and Measurement, Functions and Graphs, etc.

3) Print the pages that contain the topics lists (there is no need to print the entire bulletin).

4) Under each of these sections you’ll find a list of specific subtopics that are included under that main section. Usually there will be five or six but there may be many more. It’s these detailed, specific subtopics you will use to evaluate your current state of knowledge and preparation.

5) For each of these line items, consider how much you know about them. Have you taken any courses that include a particular topic or skill? How long ago was it? How much do you remember? Were you good at it? Did you enjoy it? These are some of the questions you need to ask yourself for each of these subtopic line items.

6) For each line item assign a self-score. The score should be simple: A 3 indicates you feel confident in that topic; a 2 indicates you have some knowledge but are not necessarily confident that you have it mastered, a 1 means you know a little about it but not much, and a 0 indicates no knowledge or previous exposure.

7) Now, for each major heading total up the score. You should end up with a list of however many main topics there are (anywhere from half a dozen to maybe ten or so), each with a cumulative score associated with it. Now rank these major topics in order from the lowest scoring to the highest.

From this analysis you now have something you can use to make a study plan. If you haven’t waited until the “last minute” you’ll have enough time to work on your plan for many weeks before the test day arrives. It’s important to have a good time management plan for studying. Did you know there is a right way to study for a test? Here’s what you do.

1) Determine in advance how much time to spend each day studying. Do this by taking into account your work or school schedule, family commitments, etc. Now is not the time for a lot of “extracurricular” activities like going camping, seeing movies, or other things. Save these for the after-exam celebration.

2) You need to allocate at least two hours per day of study time, but based on your self-analysis and how much time you have before the test, you may need
to do more.

3) Once you have a daily time allotted pick a fixed study time each day and stick to it. This isn’t always possible, but the more consistent your study is, the more effective it will be.

4) Have a specific place to study. A dedicated study area helps keep you organized and puts your mind in “study mode” because you associate the location with the specific task of studying. You’ll get more done and your study time will be more effective.

So now you’ve made an analysis of what your study needs are. You’ve figured out how many hours per week you have. Now you’re ready to really hit it.

1) Start by hitting your weakest area--HARD. HARD means give it about 50% of your weekly study time to it. If you have two equally weak areas then give them each 35% of your total time. That’ll leave some time for other areas that you’ll still need to hit, but are not going to have to work on as hard.

2) Once you’re up to speed on your weakest topics, divide the time up about equally among the remaining topics. You may still have some subject areas that you know are weaker than others. In that case, give the remaining weakest subjects a few more hours per week. This method assumes you have two or three months before your exam date.

3) If you only have a week or two, this plan (or any other plan for that matter) is NOT likely to yield the result you want. In this case it’s best to spend 80% of your time on the weak areas until you get them up to speed (if that’s even possible in a week), then spend the last week reviewing ALL the topics equally before the exam. Not a GOOD plan, but better than no plan at all.

Figure 5. Have a dedicated place and time to study

You won’t always be able to stick to a rigidly scripted study plan. Sometimes you’ll have to stop sooner than expected, and other times you may be on a roll and will want to keep going. Adhere to the following guidelines when studying for your exam:

• Don’t study for more than 50-60 minutes without a break.
• Limit breaks to 5 minutes for every 25 minutes of study time.
• Quality studying is hard work so don't over do it. Limit it to 8 hours in one day.
• Alternate between easy and difficult topics throughout the day.
• Don't stick with the same topic for more than 4 hours in a row.
• Don't study a difficult subject for more than 3-4 hours in the same day--not even if you alternate it with an easy subject.

By using these methods, you'll create a study plan that is just right for you.

Note: In the back of this book you will find an appendix that contains an example two-month study calendar and blank two-month calendar to help you plan.
How to Beat Procrastination

In this section, we tackle a nasty problem that affects just about everyone who takes the test—procrastination.

How to Procrastinate and Still Pass Your

There’s a good chance that you’ve got a thousand different things to do right now. Many of those things are probably more pressing than looking at your email or checking your phone messages. But instead of reviewing the next chapter in your textbook or going over your preparation notes, you’re reading your email and telling yourself that you’ll do some more test practice a little later. That’s procrastination: the tendency to avoid doing today what you think you can do tomorrow. Likely, you’ll avoid doing what you need to do tomorrow also.

Procrastination isn’t the same as doing nothing—you are doing something right now—and understanding that is the key to getting everything done. Procrastinators aren’t lazy, they just avoid the things they should be doing... and do something else instead. Procrastination—it’s just doing the right things in the wrong order.

Think of it this way: procrastinators aren’t people who sit around doing nothing—they’re people who sit around doing slightly important things (like reading emails or organizing their bookshelves) before they do the really important things (like summarizing Chapter 5 or taking another practice test).

If that sounds like you, don’t blame yourself; blame the way you ordered your tasks. According to psychologists, there are several reasons why people procrastinate, and there are all sorts of theories about how to beat it. Forget about beating it. You’ve probably been procrastinating for years and if you try to beat it, you’ll probably just put it off too!

Instead of trying to stop procrastinating, which is far too difficult; try to use it to pass your exam. That’s much easier. All you have to do is change the way you draw up your list of tasks.
Here's how you do it:

1) **Make a To Do List.** First, make a list of all the things you have to do. Put down everything, even the things you’re going to do anyway (like reading emails or washing the dishes).

2) **Prioritize Your Work.** Arrange your work in order of importance so that the most important things are at the top and the least important ones are at the bottom. (Already thinking that maybe you’ll start with the jobs at the bottom? That’s procrastination!)

3) **Rearrange Your List.** Now here’s where it gets interesting. Reorder your list so that the job in first place looks important but isn’t. Make it the kind of job that you have to do some time, but it doesn’t really matter when—a job you can put off easily without getting into trouble.

When you procrastinate and avoid doing that important-looking job, what you end up doing will be a more important one.

For example, your list of tasks for today might look something like this:

1. Review study guide section 3
2. Take practice test on Chapter 4 content
3. Read through notes
4. Check email

What if your list of tasks looked like this?

1. Read through notes.
2. Check email.
3. Review study guide section 3.
4. Take practice test on Chapter 4 content.

Well, you’d probably be reviewing section 3 of the study guide right now or taking the practice test. You wouldn’t be doing these things because you really want to; you’d be doing them as a way to avoid reading through your notes. That’s what procrastinators do. You’re still procrastinating, but now your procrastination is making sure that you do what’s really important first.

These techniques may seem weird, but experiments have shown that they can work. If you’re a procrastinator then by all means give it a try. What do you have to lose?
Six Weeks Before Exam Day

Use Self Hypnosis to Calm Test Anxiety

After registration, test worries begin as test day moves closer. So what do you do? Test anxiety is one of the main reasons that you may not do well on the real test. It is natural to become tense and nervous before a high-stakes exam. This anxiety reduces your ability to concentrate and correctly identify answers to the questions in front of you or even to do effective test preparation in the first place.

You can reduce this anxiety with hypnosis in two ways:

- Learning to relax
- Facing the anxiety

The test has become an ogre that creates anxiety. But you can give the exam a different look, resulting in a different feeling. Instead of feeling anxious you can learn how to turn this troubling emotion into a calm, confident, and success-oriented mindset. Doing this allows you to tap more of your inner resources during the test. This leads to test success.

Use this Technique to Relax

1) Start by sitting in a comfortable chair in a quiet room.

2) Close your eyes and let all the muscles in your body relax.

3) Start from the top of your head and think about each part of your body totally relaxing.

4) First, your scalp relaxes, then all the muscles in your face, then your neck relaxes, then your shoulders, your arms, your hands.

5) Your breathing is relaxed, your abdominal muscles relax.

6) The large muscles in your back relax all the way down your spinal column.

7) Your hips relax, your legs, your feet, all the way down to your toes.

Changing images

As you’re sitting there relaxed, allow yourself to feel the anxiety you have about test taking. Once you feel the anxiety, give that test an image. Let whatever images you have come into your mind. *Then chase away that image*, however you want to. Get rid of it. Maybe you’ll imagine yourself actually chasing it. Maybe you’ll pull the curtain on it or send it away in a hot air balloon. It’s your imagination! Be creative.

Once that image is gone, let an image of opportunity and success come into your mind. This exam really is a success opportunity for you. Think about other
opportunities and success you’ve had. Remember a time you got a good job, or conjure up a good memory of another time you did well on an important test. Use this as a personal reference to show what you can do. Maybe you were recruited to play in on a sports team. That was an opportunity to win. You were excited about having these opportunities. The exam is a new opportunity for you to show what you know—an opportunity for you to win.

Allow a positive image of the test as an opportunity for a successful you. See what you’ll become as a result of passing this test, how passing will make you a better person. How exciting! The exam has now become a game and every question is an opportunity for a slam-dunk.

Figure 7. Relaxation is the key to learning, recall, good decision-making and success

Relaxing
1) After you have decided on your positive opportunity image of the exam, let your imagination take you to a comfortable place.

2) Maybe you like going to the beach, a garden, a meadow, or a wooded area. Notice how relaxed and comfortable you are in this special place.

3) When you do your practice questions in your study guide, you now have three ways to reduce any anxiety.

4) You relax all the muscles in your body by just closing your eyes for a moment and letting all the tension go.

5) You image the test as a positive opportunity.

6) You allow yourself to go to a place in your imagination where you’re relaxed and comfortable any time you want.

7) When you actually take the exam, these techniques will reduce your anxiety, improve your concentration and lead to improved test performance.

Use Visualization
Hypnosis can help with test taking in two main ways: Information recall and anxiety reduction. Our subconscious mind stores everything we have read. Whatever
information you have studied is there in your subconscious mind—somewhere. The problem is retrieving it. If we get anxious about forgetting information or about test taking, that anxiety also reduces our recall. Hypnosis can improve recall and reduce anxiety.

Here’s what you do:

1) Take advantage of a naturally occurring hypnotic state that happens just before falling asleep, called the hypnagogic or presleep state. When you’re in bed, right before going to sleep, say the following words ten times: "every day in every way I am better and better"

2) Visualize, imagine, or feel yourself becoming better and better in every aspect of the testing procedure. Do these activities for at least six weeks before you take the exam.

3) Include the following visualizations and feelings. Picture a storage container that appeals to you. It could be a drawer, a chest, a box, whatever image you like. That storage area is where, in your mind, you’re putting all the test information you’re studying.

4) Whenever you need that information, answering sample questions, or review questions, or a practice test or the actual test, imagine yourself opening that storage area.

5) Also, picture yourself calm, confident, and totally prepared to take your exam. See yourself walking into the exam area knowing you’ll pass. Let that image and those feelings come into your mind in as much detail as possible.

6) As soon as the test starts, feel self-confidence coming over you. In your mind’s eye, see, feel, or imagine answering all the test questions, staying totally focused. See yourself opening your knowledge storage area as needed.

7) Also, imagine getting the official notification of passing the test and how that will feel. While awake, reinforce and focus on only positive images of passing. The word PASS is always in your mind. Remind yourself you will remember what you have learned and easily recall the correct answers. There is an old saying among hypnotists—what the mind perceives, the body believes. Use your mind as an ally to pass your exam by focusing it only on positive outcomes.

Don’t discount these ideas unless you have tried them.
Test Prep. Time Management

In this section, we’re going to look at a subject that’s closely related to procrastination: test prep time management. Face it; if you don’t use your time efficiently when preparing for the test, you won’t be prepared enough to pass. If you don’t use your time efficiently you can waste six months before you’re finally ready to take and pass the test. It’s your choice. Here’s how to slay the test dragon with good test preparation time management.

One of the first things that people tell you when you start preparing for the exam is to make a schedule and stick to it. (Make no mistake—that is exactly what you should do!). Nice idea. Everyone makes a schedule—few test takers stick to it.

It’s not just the procrastinators who have a problem prioritizing the order in which they do things (although once you’ve taken those people out, there aren’t many left); it’s just about everyone.

The fact is you can’t possibly schedule every minute of your day, despite what some people might tell you. Friends will stop by, the phone will ring, and small tasks that you scheduled to complete in half an hour will take you forty or fifty minutes. Every time something happens that you didn’t schedule, your preparation timetable gets thrown off course. When you give yourself a tightly constructed schedule with no room for flexibility, all you do is invite frustration and anxiety when you fall behind. When you can’t stay with a schedule that’s not realistic, you end up abandoning time management. That’s a big mistake.

The practical way to manage your time isn’t to try to schedule every single minute so that you don’t waste a second. It’s best to draw up a loose schedule that consists only of the most important things. The less important things will take care of themselves.

Here’s how you do it:

1) Write Out a List of Everything You Think You Have to Do. Put everything on this list, from reviewing last week’s practice test to putting out the cat. What are the
odds that you'll keep to that schedule at the end of the day? Putting all the things you need to remember on paper rather than trying to carry it around in your head can help you drop half of your test stress and anxiety. You'll probably sleep a lot better at night and worry a lot less about forgetting the important things you have to do tomorrow.

2) **Highlight the Three Most Important Things on the List.** Now cut your schedule down to a realistic size and complexity. Use the technique from the previous section on procrastination to list the three most important tasks that you want completed by the end of the day and ignore everything else. Decide which tasks are the 20% of the ones on your list that will give you 80% of the results you're looking to achieve. Don't confuse movement with achievement. You need to focus on the results you want to achieve for the day, not a bunch of activities.

3) **Create a New Schedule.** Now create a new schedule that only has those three tasks on it (or 20% of the activities that give you 80% of the results that are most important to you -- like passing the test.

You may say that you have a lot more than three things to do! Yes you do, but you must choose the top three things that, if completed today, would move you closest to your goal of doing well on the exam. This strategy has tremendous power of focus that will yield the greatest progress towards your goal of a passing score.

Your schedule won't have more than three things on it:

9:00am   Review part 2 of the study guide.

10:00pm Review calculus formula index cards.

11:00pm Do the practice questions in the Comprehensive Success System.

**Note:** In the back of this book you will find an appendix that contains an example two-month study calendar and blank two-month calendar to help you plan.

Clearly, you're going to do a lot more than those three things. You're also going to look at your emails, read the news headlines, make yourself some coffee and have lunch. Maybe even wash the car.

4) **Complete 100% of Each Activity Before Moving to the Next.** Make sure you do activity number one first thing (before reading the news, checking your e-mail, etc.) and see it to 100% completion before starting on activity two. Do activity two to 100% completion before starting activity three.

You're going to do those things no matter what else happens. Whether or not the kitchen is cleaned today won't have much impact on you in one year, but passing the test will. Only the truly important things, like reviewing part 2 of the study guide,
need to be put on your schedule.

5) Work in Blocks of Uninterrupted Time. Turn off your phone and put a Do Not Disturb sign on your door. Communicate to others that during certain blocks of time, you can't be disturbed. You absolutely need uninterrupted time to fully concentrate on the task at hand when you're doing your top three items for the day. Every time a phone is answered, or a person comes in to talk, it wastes major time. Then it takes even more time to get back to where you were. This destroys your productivity and jeopardizes your success.

Remember our discussion of procrastination? Even if you do procrastinate, you'll simply find yourself doing the practice test in the morning in order to avoid reviewing Chapter 2 of the study guide, or working on a practice test in the afternoon when there's nothing left to do.
Three Weeks Before Test Day

Increasing the Focus on Your Weakest Areas

By now you should have enough study time behind you to be able to reevaluate what you need to work on.

1) If possible, get a hold of a practice test and take it. Make the conditions realistic. Adhere to the time limit of the test and do not use anything that will not be allowed on the real exam (like an illegal calculator or notes).

2) If you cannot obtain a realistic practice test, look around the Internet at the websites for similar tests. Often times you can find something that may not be exactly like what you are taking, but it will be close enough for self-evaluation purposes.

3) If you absolutely cannot find a valid practice test, use the questions in the test information booklet provided by the testing company. If you’ve already tried these questions, have a friend rewrite them or use whiteout to change the numbers slightly so you will have to solve the problems over again. You should be able to tell if you get them right or not, by seeing if you used the correct method or approach.

4) Score the practice test and write down the top two or three areas in which you did the worst.

Now refocus your study time over the next three weeks to concentrate on these areas. Remember to practice your self-hypnosis and visualization techniques. If you don’t do well on the practice test don’t panic. You still have three weeks to prepare!

Figure 9. Refocusing now keeps you working on the important things
Add Some Variety

Now is a good time to add some different tactics to your test prep routine.

1) If you have been studying alone, find a partner to study with—preferably one who has some skills and knowledge to share in the areas in which you need the most help.

2) Find some video lessons on your needed topics. You can find some at the library or a used bookstore. If there are no video lessons on the topic you need, look for a software package that will do the job.

3) If you are having trouble remembering things, make a set of flash cards and study them when you have some spare time at lunch, during a break, or while waiting for an appointment.

4) Once you learn a basic problem solving technique, go over it in your head. Solve problems mentally. Walk yourself through the algorithms in your mind to cement them into your long-term memory.

5) Make mind maps of concepts in your head. Connect related things together so one bit of knowledge leads naturally to another until you build long strings of related information in your memory.
Ace Your Multiple Choice Questions

In a previous section, we talked about managing your time. Your best bet when preparing for your exam is to use a flexible schedule that lets you adjust to all the different things that will happen during your day. Tight schedules can just make you give up on time management when you can't stick to them. Choose and schedule the top three activities each day that will bring you the closest to a passing score on your test.

In this section, we're going to look at some specific advice for tackling the test questions.

The Secret Formula for Acing Multiple Choice Questions on Your

If you know the answers to the questions 100% of the time on the test, you don't need a formula. However, if you don't know the answers to the questions, the formula will help you to find them.

Acing multiple-choice questions on the test is easy. There's a special process of elimination that increases your chances of choosing the correct answer.

Look at it this way: If every multiple choice test you took contained just two answer choices, you could get about 50% right without even studying.

When you use the right process of elimination, while everyone else is starting with a 20 or 25 percent start, you’re starting at 50 percent. That means you only need to know half as many correct answers to get the same score!

Figure 10. With the right formula, multiple-choice questions are easier to guess on

Here’s how it works:

1) **Knock out the stupid answers.** Many multiple choice question on the test have at least one wild-card answer that looks nothing like any of the others and couldn't be right in a million years. Anyone that's a little familiar with the content of the exam won't choose it. Cross that one out first.

2) **Knock out the answer that's "almost" right.** Examiners know that some people will look at the question, have a quick think and look for the answer that's in the
ballpark. That's why they include an answer choice that's only half-right. Half right is WRONG and it's a "trick" answer put in to fool you. Find that answer and cross it out next.

3) **Spot two answers that look similar.** By now, your options should include two choices that look very similar. One of those answers is right. The other is almost right.

This is the real trick to multiple-choice questions on the test: every right answer has a wrong answer that looks almost exactly like it—almost. If the answer you're thinking about choosing doesn't have a partner like this, it's probably wrong. When you spot two answers that look very similar, one of them is likely to be the right one.

When you have these two answer choices in hand, you have a 50 percent chance of picking the right one. And that's already a good start. This doubles your probability of getting the correct answer and a passing score even if you're not 100% prepared or know all the answers.
Ace Your Essay Questions

In the last section we talked about how to score the most points on multiple-choice questions. In this lesson, we're going to look at some specific advice for tackling essay questions. Not all exams include an essay portion. If yours doesn't, you can skip this section.

The Secret Formula for Acing Essay Questions on Your Exam

One of the big secrets about standardized exams is that there are two ways to sail through them: you can either know the answers to the questions or you can know how to answer the questions. (You should be somewhat competent in both areas.)

What's the difference? If you know the answers to the questions 100% of the time on the exam, you don't need a formula. But, if you don't know the answers to the questions, the formula will help you.

To ace essay questions on the exam, the formula is in the structure. If you have the structure right, finding the right facts and arguments to slot into place will be a breeze.

Figure 11. Use the correct formula to increase your score on essay questions

A Fool-Proof Essay Structure

Here's how to create a structure that you can use to ace any essay question on the test.

1) Look at as many past exams as you can lay your hands on; most people look at one old exam or set of practice questions before a test. You want to find about five (or even more if you can). When you look at a lot of old questions, you'll start to see a pattern.

2) There's always a pattern to the questions. If there were no pattern, the examiners wouldn't be able to compare results from one year to the next. That's why they call it a standardized test. When essay questions have a pattern, so do the answers.
3) In essay responses, create an answer with this pattern: Argument, Counter-Argument, Knockout Argument, and Conclusion. If you can identify the pattern of the questions—if you can see how they’re all asking a similar question—you can put together the kind of answer that the examiners are looking for.

If you can’t see how all the questions lead to the same answer pattern, you can use this answer pattern:

- Paragraph 1: Introduction
- Paragraph 2: Argument For
- Paragraph 3: Argument Against
- Paragraph 4: Knockout Argument (For or Against)
- Paragraph 5: Conclusion

You can think of this formula as a skeleton key that opens the door to success on any essay question. That’s it. In the time that you have available in the exam room, no one is going to expect you to do any more than that. Once you’ve got this structure, you simply need to...

4) Slot in the facts. With the right structure, slotting in the facts is going to be very easy. Even if you know nothing about the subject, you can use your imagination to try to figure out what the most likely arguments for and against might be.

The right structure makes it easy to guess the right facts. Moreover, even if you get the facts partially wrong, you’ll still get points for structuring your argument correctly.
Three Days Before Exam Day

What to Do In the 72 Hours Before Your

By now you should know how to outsmart your procrastination and make the best use of your time. You should know how to ace the essays and multiple-choice questions, use your exam nerves in a positive way, and get your head into exactly the right frame of mind. You should also know how to fill your mind with all the information you need—FAST—to pass. In this section, you're going to get a complete testing review schedule to run you through the last three days before the exam.

Whether this is the first time you've opened a book or whether you've been studying a review course non-stop for the last six months, these last three days are the time to cement knowledge into your brain. You're going to spend this entire day going over the material, the next day taking practice tests and the last day (if there's time) filling in the gaps.

1) First, make a list of all the topics and their sub-topics that you've had to cover as part of your preparation. Try to do this without referring to any references about the test—do it from memory. You want to be able to generate a complete overview of your entire test. Writing everything out will remind you of what you learned, expose your weak points, and reveal what your preparation is all about.

2) Next, read the material in order and highlight the most important points; ideally, you'll want to know absolutely everything that will be on the test. But that's impossible and you don't really need to know everything. Pick out the areas that you know are most important, and highlight them so that you can still see them on the page when you close your eyes.

3) Copy that information onto flash cards, still carefully organized, to make them easier to memorize. Flash cards are a neat way to study. You can organize them so that one point leads naturally to the next and as you write them out, you'll start to remember them. Keep them in your pocket so that you can review them at any time: during lunch break, waiting for a movie to start, even while you're waiting for the bus.

4) Start memorizing the material (or in the case of a math test, start solving appropriate problems). There needs to be a blitz process of constantly hammering the facts into your head.
Two Days Before Exam Day

E-Day Minus 48 hours

Yesterday, you started your final memorization of the material for your exam. Today, you’re going to test your memory to see what you’re still missing.

Note: If you are working a job, it’s a good idea to take the next three days off if at all possible.

1) Take a complete, timed practice test first thing in the morning. Make sure nothing disturbs you. You want to get the timing right as well as the knowledge.

2) Make the practice test realistic—no illegal materials and use a time limit.

3) Review the answers. Checking the answers to the practice test is as important as taking the exam. Don’t worry about the questions you got right. However, if you don’t take action, the practice questions you get wrong today will be the ones you get wrong on the big day.

4) Pay special attention to your mistakes and any weak areas. For the rest of the day, focus on those questions you got wrong. Go over your notes, take more practice tests on the same subtopics that you still had trouble with (not every subject on the exam) and make sure you know how to get them right next time.

Figure 12. It’s getting down to the crunch. Don’t stop now!
The Day Before the Exam

Make a Time Management Plan for the Test Itself

Do you worry about running out of time on your test? You needn't. Having test time management plan can make the difference between a passing and a failing score. You need to invest the time given to maximize your return on test points. You need to pace yourself. Spend your time on questions you have a very good chance of getting correct. Spend very little time laboring over questions you don't have any idea what the answer is.

Develop a sense of calm urgency. You want to be aware of the time—but not to get you nervous. Just the opposite in fact, so you can relax your mind, concentrate and know how much time you can spend on each question. You'll leave yourself time at the end so lower your stress and so your best.

- Don't assume your testing room has a clock in it. So, wear a watch and use it!
- Take 100% responsibility for time by knowing how much time is left at various intervals.

Step-by-Step Multiple Choice Test Time Management Planning

NOTE: Make sure you do these first two steps BEFORE the day of the exam.

For tests that contain ONLY selected response (multiple choice) questions, do the following:

![Figure 13. Plan your test time—you'll be glad you did](image)

1) Calculate the AVERAGE TIME PER QUESTION (ATQ) for your test. If you spend much more than this on the questions, you'll run out of time before answering them all. To do this divide the test time (in minutes) by the number of questions on the test. For example, if the test has 50 questions and the time is 120 minutes, $120/50 = 2.4$ minutes per question.
2) Round the ATQ DOWN to the nearest minute to arrive at your working ATQ. In the above example, you would round down to 2 minutes per question. If the ATQ is a whole number of minutes, subtract 30 seconds from it. For example, if the initial ATQ is 2 minutes, the revised ATQ is 1.5 minutes.

There's great variety in the time needed for constructed response questions. Some tests have more than one essay or other written response requirement. Some people like to do the constructed response first; some prefer to save it for last. It really doesn't matter, so long as you have a PLAN. One thing's for sure, you should use all the time given and to put your all into the exam. ONLY the fools think it's a race to see who can finish first.

Step by Step Constructed Response Test Time Management Planning

If your exam includes a constructed response portion you need to take these additional step. Determine the amount time to allow yourself for each constructed response (essay) questions by doing the following:

3) You can make a good estimate of the time needed by following the advice given in the test description material published by the testing organization. You can ask others who have taken the test to get a good idea on time.

4) No matter how you do it, CHOOSE IN ADVANCE HOW MUCH TIME TO DEVOTE TO THE CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE PORTION.

5) Be prepared to adjust your estimate slightly after you see the actual prompt that appears on your test.

6) Don't forget to factor in time for the multiple-choice questions as was explained earlier.

7) Always use a little "fudge factor" when calculating the time you have for each essay question. Give yourself extra time at the end for multiple-choice guesses, to complete unfinished questions and to keep your nervousness to a bare minimum.

Relax

It is especially important that you get a good night’s sleep before the exam. Resist the temptation to stay up late studying. You will probably be nervous the night before the exam, so you really have to put your relaxation techniques to good use and do everything in your power to get a good night’s sleep.
Exam Day

The Few Hours Before Your ...

If your exam is early in the morning there isn't going to be much you can do to improve your score at this point. The best thing you can do is to relax your mind using self-hypnosis and kick your success visualization into overdrive.

If you have some time before your test, you can perhaps add a point or two by cramming. Some people are against cramming. If you are opposed to it then don't do it—just relax.

Final Preparation

Do a little bit of cramming to make sure that nothing is forgotten.

1) Spend the morning answering practice test questions. Don't worry about timing now. You want to make sure that you understand what the questions are trying to do and how they work. This is the time you'll use to fill in as many knowledge gaps as possible. Start with the hard ones and end with the easier ones so that you end with confidence.

2) Put the practice exam questions aside and read over the highlighted portions of your study guide. Go over your flash cards.

3) Finally, put away your study guide, your notes and your pen. Clear your head and let yourself feel confident that you're going to blitz the exam.

4) You want to try to relax just before the test.

The Best Tactics for Tackling the Test

1) Go through the entire test one question at a time -- QUICKLY! As you encounter questions that you can do within the ATQ (see previous section), do them right then, and keep moving. Also, if you encounter a question you have no chance of figuring out (there will be some) make a mark next to it and save it for the end. KEEP AN EYE ON THE TIME.

2) After you've gone through the test once using this tactic, go back and tackle the questions you skipped. Work hard on each (in any order from "easiest" to "hardest") for no more that the ATQ. If you think you're within a minute of solving a problem when the ATQ has passed, KEEP GOING and FINISH IT, otherwise mark it to come back to it later. KEEP AN EYE ON THE TIME.

3) As you work on the harder questions, and even if you still can't decide on the correct answer, CROSS OUT answers you are pretty sure are NOT correct. This will save time later, and improve your score, when you're in final guessing mode.

4) Now you've gone through your questions twice, answering the majority of them.
If you followed the ATQ method there will be time left. Subtract one minute from the time remaining—this is the time you have to answer the remaining questions intelligently without guessing. Use your own discretion to decide which ones to work on. Mark the ones you still can't figure out. When there is one minute left on the test—THAT'S IT, TIME TO GUESS.

5) In the last minute, go through the test and guess on the unanswered questions. If you marked the problems earlier, you should find the ones requiring a guess quickly and have no problem making sure every question is answered before the proctor calls time. LEAVE NO QUESTIONS UNANSWERED.

Figure 14. Be the test taker who does it right, from beginning to end
Appendix

Use these calendars to help in your test planning. Your test prep plans will probably change as you proceed so you may have to use the blank calendar templates more than once.

Test Planning Example Calendar

This example is based on a two-month lead-time.

Month August

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<td>4-7 pm priority study 8:30-10:30 pm general study</td>
<td>9 am-12 pm priority study 2:30-4:30 pm general study</td>
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Test Planning Blank Calendar for Your Use

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