NEED HELP TAKING EXAMS?

College of Southern Idaho Learning Assistance Center
Department of Academic Development
http://www.csi.edu/ip/adc/lap
Coping Strategies for Test-Taking

1. Improve Study Skills; Better Preparation
2. Improve General Lifestyle
3. Learn Relaxation Techniques and Practice Them
4. Use Positive Self-talk
5. Manage The Test Environment
6. Improve Test-taking Skill

Strategy #1 – Tips for Overcoming Procrastination

1. **Set Realistic Goals** - Look ahead toward things that are within your grasp, push the limit enough to stretch your abilities, but not so much that you set yourself up to fail. Having a goal helps you be motivated to get there.

2. **Study in Small Blocks of Time** - Research shows that the average attention span is about 1 ½ hours. Take occasional brief breaks to increase your focus & reduce the total time needed to study.

3. **Modify Your Environment** - An environment with limited distractions will reduce wasted time and energy. A good study area should be quiet, have good lighting, all tools you need and space to spread out.

4. **Learn to Say NO Once Your Priorities are Set** - Don’t allow others to pull you away from your plan. Just say NO!

5. **Get Support** - Let family and friends know your plans and ask them to assist you in reaching your goals.

6. **Study Difficult Subjects first** - Study the subjects you like the least first and you will be more likely to move forward to your enjoyable subjects.

7. **Stay Away from the telephone When You’re Trying to Get Work Done** - The telephone can be a time thief.

Strategy #2 – Improve Your General Lifestyle

1. **Sleep Well** - Try to get at least 6 hours, but 8 to 10 hours a night is better.

2. **Eat Nutritious Food** - Avoid sugar and caffeine. Eat a variety of foods and drink plenty of water.

3. **Exercise Regularly** - ½ hour 4 to 5 times a week is recommended. A walk around the CSI circle is 1 mile and will give you added energy and alertness.
Strategy #3 - Relaxation
1. Take 3 Deep Breaths
2. Tense your muscles, Hold for 5 Seconds, Release.
3. Visualize yourself doing well on the exam
4. Use Your Relaxation Techniques:
   - When you are studying & start to tense up.
   - Just prior to the test - the calming effect will last for a while.
   - During the test if you feel yourself start to get anxious.
   - The key to success is Practice!

Strategy #4 - Use Positive Self-talk

A= Activating Event
   - Tension builds when anticipating or taking test

B= Belief
   - Negative self-talk: “I always mess up on tests!”

C= Consequences
   - Anxiety attack begins & mind goes completely blank

Examples of Positive Self-talk
1. “I have prepared well, I can pass this test.”
2. “There will probably be some questions I can’t answer, but that doesn’t mean I can’t get a good grade.”

- Write your affirmations on a 3x5 card & carry in your wallet or purse.
- Post on mirror, refrigerator, or computer monitor
- Practice saying them to yourself often

Strategy #5 - Manage the Test Environment
1. Plan to use the entire time - don’t rush through
2. Stop, pause, and relax
3. Sit in a location with few distractions and good lighting
4. Skip questions you aren’t sure of - answer questions you know well first
5. Seek accommodations if you have a disability
Strategy #6 – Improve Your Test-taking Skills

1. **Do an Information Dump!** Before you begin answering, jot down hard to remember formulas and terms on the margins or back of exam.

2. **Survey the Exam.** Before you begin answering, take a quick look at the whole exam. This may help you decide where to begin & how much time to spend on each question.

3. **Read directions** CAREFULLY and underline key phrases. Not reading directions carefully and lack of following directions fully is the #1 reason for doing poorly on an exam.

4. **Do Recognition Questions First** Recognition questions are true/false, multiple and matching. These questions require only that you recognize an answer and they may give you clues for the more challenging questions.

5. **Multiple Choice** Draw a line through answers you know are incorrect.

6. **True/False** Watch for qualifiers such as always, never, maybe, and sometimes. The ENTIRE statement must be true for the answer to be true.

7. **Essay Exams** Analyze each question carefully and plan what you will write before you start writing.

8. **Give the exam a Once Over** Check to make sure you did not miss answering any questions and check answers. Our first impulse is usually correct, so change an answer only if you are absolutely sure.

9. **Use Positive Self-talk.**

10. **Relax!** Use your strategies to calm yourself.