

GLE3OR Unit 1: Learning Skills

Activity 4: How to Improve Your Study Skills and Test-Taking

Overview

Students can improve their test taking and study skills by using some simple but effective strategies, as outlined in this activity. Studying effectively for a test can be accomplished using the SQ3R method of reading and comprehending text. Test-taking strategies include using mnemonic devices, such as acronyms to remember critical information. Planning for the allocated time during a test is also important. Reading and understanding written directions is yet another piece of the puzzle. By using all these strategies together, better results can be achieved.

Lesson



Studying for tests is a part of school and there is no way to avoid them. Instead of getting stressed out by tests, students need to become better prepared and less anxious when they know that a test is coming up.

There are many ways to get ready for a test. The first thing that needs to be done is to know exactly what the purpose of the test is. Teachers need to be specific about the skills and concepts that they are looking for in an assessment. **Don't be afraid to ask** them if this is unclear.

Once there is a clear understanding of the requirements of the test, ensure that good study notes are available. If a class has been missed, or for some other reason the **proper notes** aren't there to study from, students should ask a peer for a copy of the notes. They can be photocopied to save time, although writing the notes out is actually a good way to remember the information in them.

Good notes will have the important information, usually in point or bulleted form. It is impossible and unwise to try and write down everything a teacher says. The main idea of a concept, with some supporting details, is all that is really needed.



Notes should be dated to help keep them organized. Giving the notes a title is a good idea too. If the notes are taken from a textbook, **jot the page numbers down in the margin**. This will help if you want to refer back to the text later, because the notes are unclear or incomplete.

Students should **use headings and sub-headings** to make it easier to categorize the information. Using graphic organizers and charts is a good idea too.

A useful strategy for understanding and remembering notes is called the **SQ3R Strategy**. It can be used to learn information from a textbook or for reading over lecture notes.

How the SQ3R Strategy Works

SQ3R Strategy

Survey - First, survey the document by scanning the contents, looking over the text introduction, chapter introductions and chapter summaries to get a quick overview of the text.

Question - Make a note of any questions that come to mind, or anything that is of interest following the survey. These questions can be used as study goals – by understanding the answers it can help to structure the information and retain it more easily.

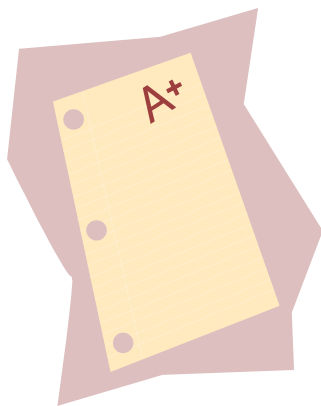
Read - Now read the text or notes. Read through each section, until there is a good understanding of all the important points. Sometimes the text will have to be re-read several times to be completely grasped. Use some of the reading comprehension strategies previously mentioned in Unit 1, Activity 3 to help.

Recall - Once the necessary sections of the text have been read, think about them several times by verbalizing and visualizing. Think about the core facts, and try to fit them into existing 'schema' or knowledge about the topic.

Review - Once the information has been recalled, move on to the stage of reviewing it. This review can be done by rereading the text or notes, or by discussing the material with another person. A very effective method of reviewing information is to teach it to someone else. By talking about it and re-phrasing it, it becomes embedded into the memory.

Now that the studying has been done, students have to prepare for the actual test. Keeping a good agenda is important to know when tests are coming up. There is nothing worse than forgetting about a test and then having to take it without having studied at all!

Test-Taking



Student must make sure that they are **physically and psychologically prepared for a test**. Getting a good night's sleep the night before and eating a healthy breakfast in the morning are obvious, but important things to do. Staying calm and confident will also help ease pre-test jitters and prevent anxiety from blocking a good test performance.

The day of the test, students need to **bring all the necessary materials** such as pencils, pens, calculators, dictionaries and a watch. Students should try to arrive early for a test to help ease tension, rather than rushing around and getting there late. **Relax and use positive self-talk** to prepare mentally for the test.

When the test starts, students should **read all directions first** to make sure that the entire content of the test has been considered. There is also a need to **plan for the allocated time** given for the test. Think about how many multiple choice, essay questions or fill-in-the-blanks there are. Essay-type questions will take longer and will need more time to complete.

Start with the easiest questions first. This gives students a chance to gain confidence and score some points quickly. Then, the more difficult questions can be tackled. If there are essay questions on the test, jot down ideas in point form first to create a framework for the writing.

Before leaving the test, students need to **review what has been done.** Checking for careless mistakes, missed questions, spelling and punctuation fixes is the final step in completing the test.

Once the test is marked and returned, students can use the information provided by the teacher to do better on future tests. Test-taking is a lot easier to handle if students have entered the testing situation well-prepared!

Assignment

1. Sort the important versus the interesting facts from the list below onto the T-chart provided.

<i>Important</i>	<i>Interesting</i>

Sharks: An Endangered Species

- Chonrichthyes class, 30 families, 400 species of sharks
- Vertebrates with skeletons made of cartilage
- Some species over 350 million years old, little need to evolve
- Great White Shark is one of oldest living species
- Most are predators and carnivores
- Great White Shark feared among humans as 'man-eating machines' (fiction and movies)
- Shoes, cow's hoof, deer antlers, medieval armour, chicken coop with feathers and bones have been found inside tiger shark bellies
- Skin smooth in one direction and rough in the other
- Shark may grow and use 20,000 teeth in lifetime
- Sharks have powerful jaws
- Have tongues called basihyal
- Both upper and lower jaws move
- Great White Shark is a threatened species

2. Read the list below and place a check mark next all the things that you currently do when taking a test at school. Based on your answers, what test-taking habits can be improved?

When I take a test, I usually...

- am prepared and on time for the test.
- listen carefully to my teacher's directions.
- read the test directions three times.
- figure out a schedule for the test and write time allotments next to the questions.
- skim all of the test questions.
- read each question three times and underline the key words (such as define, describe, compare, etc.)
- do the easiest questions first.
- put question marks next to those I can't answer right away.
- go back and answer the questions with a question mark.
- make double question marks next to ones I still can't answer.
- tackle the double-marked questions – if I still have time.
- spend five minutes checking over my test.
- don't change answers without a good reason.
- learn from my mistakes.
- save all of my tests to plan a strategy for the next test.

3. Make a note of 2 test-taking strategies that could be used for future tests and write a paragraph about them. Then write a 2-paragraph reflection on your personal study habits and test-taking skills. Finally, develop a plan to implement the identified strategies necessary for successful test-taking.

Rubric

Test-Taking Strategies Rubric				
Categories	Level 1 (50 - 59%)	Level 2 (60 - 69%)	Level 3 (70 - 79%)	Level 4 (80 - 100%)
Knowledge and Understanding Identify two personal test-taking strategies	identifies two personal test-taking strategies with limited perception	identifies two personal test-taking strategies with some perception	identifies two personal test-taking strategies with considerable perception	identifies two personal test-taking strategies with thoughtful perception
Thinking Summarize personal strengths and skills during test-taking	summarizes personal strengths and skills during test-taking with limited perception	summarizes personal strengths and skills during test-taking with some perception	summarizes personal strengths and skills during test-taking with considerable perception	summarizes personal strengths and skills during test-taking with thoughtful perception
Identify need for two specific test-taking strategies	identifies need for two specific test-taking strategies with limited insight	identifies need for two specific test-taking strategies with some insight	identifies need for two specific test-taking strategies with considerable insight	identifies need for two specific test-taking strategies with thoughtful insight
Communication Explain test-taking strategies in a coherent manner	explanation of strategies demonstrates limited understanding	explanation of strategies demonstrates some understanding	explanation of strategies demonstrates considerable understanding	explanation of strategies demonstrates thorough understanding
Application Create a plan to implement the identified strategies necessary for successful test-taking	creates a plan with limited perception	creates a plan with some perception	creates a plan with considerable perception	creates a plan with thoughtful perception