



Test Taking Strategies for Nurses

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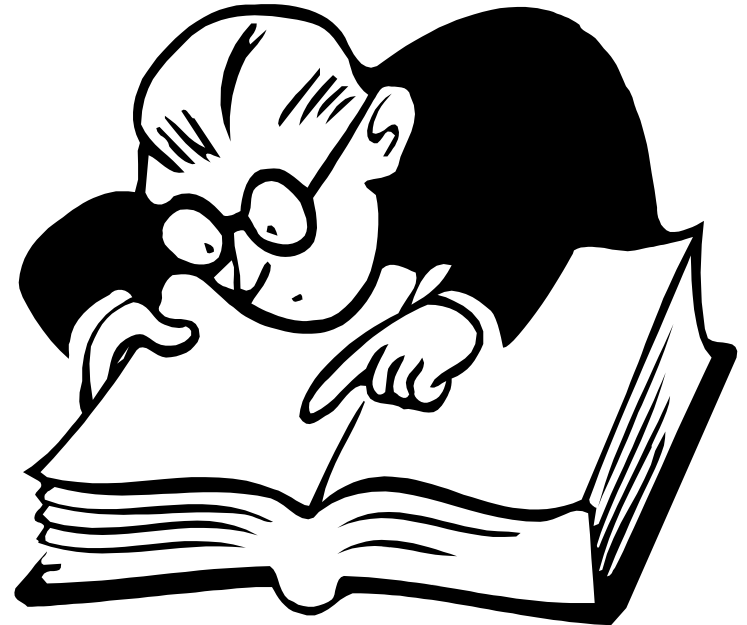
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Information for this booklet was obtained from:

- Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins (2003). "Professor Nightengale's Test-Taking Strategies for Student Nurses," video.
- Nugent, P. and Vitale, B. (2000). Test Success, Test-Taking Techniques for Beginning Nursing Students.
- Millman and Paulk (1978). How to Take Tests.

Empower Yourself!



Empower Yourself by Controlling your Thoughts and Emotions

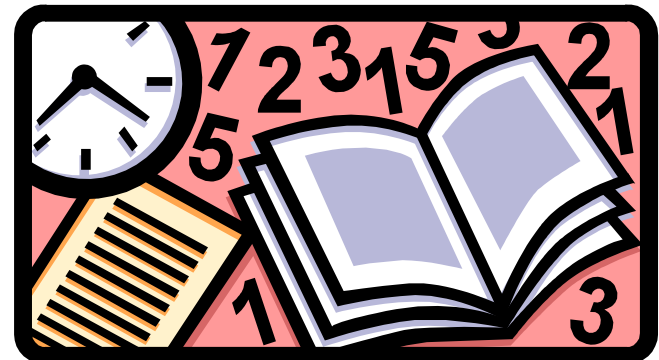
- Keep a positive mental attitude.
- Challenge negative thoughts.
- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Desensitize yourself to your fear of tests.
- Use positive imagery to reduce physical reactions to stress.

Prepare for the Test

- Manage your daily routine to ensure that you get enough rest.
- Exercise.
- Eat well and limit caffeine.
- Understand your own personal learning style.
- Study where you can concentrate.
- Study in short intervals.
- Go to all of your classes.
- Make flashcards, outlines, and summary sheets.
- Form study groups with motivated students.
- Over-preparation instills confidence.



- **Outline-**
A condensed summary of a particular subject using key words.
- **Prove-**
To establish the truth or validity by evidence or demonstration. See **justify**.
- **Review-**
To cover the main point succinctly. To condense a subject into a briefer format.
- **Select-**
See **choose**.
- **State-**
To express in words. Concentrate on main points rather than specific details.
- **Summarize-**
See **review**.
- **Trace-**
To set forth events step by step. Usually done in chronological order.





Test Taking Techniques

- **Examine-**
To inspect closely. To investigate. To look at all the pieces.
 - **Explain-**
To take something that is difficult and put it in language that is more understandable. To specify a reason or cause. To show the logical development of relationships. To tell the specifics.
 - **Identify-**
To know the personal or distinguishing characteristics of something or someone.
 - **Interpret-**
To explain or tell the meaning of something in understandable terms. To give your own feelings and personal opinions.
 - **Justify-**
To defend or explain why something is the way it is. You must present your specific reasons for feeling the way you do.
 - **List-**
To write items down in a numbered sequence. See **enumerate**.
- Arrive on time for the test.
 - Bring the appropriate tools to the test.
 - Understand all of the directions for the test before starting.
 - Manage the allotted time to your advantage.
 - Concentrate on the simple questions before the complex ones.
 - Make educated guesses.
 - Maintain a positive mental attitude.
 - Check your answers and answer sheet.
 - Stay away from crowds and anxious people.
 - Pace yourself.
 - Read **every** line; don't just scan the questions.
 - Concentrate on one question at a time.
 - **Never** change your answer unless you are completely sure you made a mistake.
 - Pick the most complete answer and **always** answer all questions.
 - Use logic and common sense; your first hunch is usually the right one.
 - Remind yourself that **you are in control!**

Composition and Analysis of the Multiple Choice Test Question

- **Stem-** the question.
 - Case scenario- explains the situation.
 - Issue- the specific problem or subject of the question.
 - Analysis- focus on what you know about the issue.
 - Problem
 - Procedure
 - Drug
 - Disorder
 - Behavior
- **Options-** choice of answers.
 - Distracters- answers that don't answer the question.
 - Keywords- words that set priority or directionalized care.
 - General keywords.
 - Early
 - Late
 - Immediately after
 - Most likely
 - Least likely
 - Initial or priority nursing action
 - After several days
 - On day of admission
 - Universal keywords
 - All
 - Only
 - Every
 - Entire
 - Always
 - Negative keywords
 - No
 - Not
 - Never
 - Rarely
 - Least essential
 - Lowest priority
 - Inappropriate
 - Contraindicated
- **Diagram-**
To make a chart, graph, or drawing with labels to identify the key parts. May also need a written explanation of the parts.
- **Differentiate-**
To find the differences between two things. See **contrast**.
- **Discuss-**
To tell everything you know about a subject. To investigate by reasoning or argument.
- **Enumerate-**
To specify one after one item after another. To list.
- **Evaluate-**
To determine or fix the value of something. A thorough, careful appraisal and study. To state the good and the bad. To give your personal opinion.



Words That Appear Most Frequently in Essay Questions

- **Analyze-**
To dissect something or break it down into its different parts. To examine relationships among the parts.
- **Choose-**
To select freely and after consideration. To state a preference for something. You will usually need to defend your choice; in other words, you will need to back your choice up with specific examples and personal opinions.
- **Compare-**
To examine the qualities of two things to discover the differences between them.
- **Contrast-**
To examine the qualities of two things to discover the similarities between them.
- **Criticize-**
To consider the merits and demerits of something and judge it accordingly. To give your judgment or opinion about something. When you criticize, you look at both the good and the bad. Constructive criticism means that you might make negative comments, but that you do so as feedback to help the other person improve or change his behavior. Criticism can be predominantly positive.
- **Define-**
To set forth the meaning of a word or an idea.
- **Describe-**
To write a detailed account or verbal picture. To tell everything you know about a subject.

Tips on How to Examine Multiple Choice Test Questions

Practice critical thinking!

- Examine the stem
- Reframe the question
- Critique the stem
- Evaluate

Tips on How to Answer Multiple Choice Test Questions

- Try to construct the correct answer before you look at the options.
- Identify patient-centered options.
- Identify opposite answers first and closely --- they may be distracters.
- Identify specific determiners in options such as always, never, all, etc.
- When any part of an option is wrong, the entire answer is wrong.
- Some questions will have a false response; the question may ask you which action is contradicted so you should look for the **wrong nursing action**.
- Identify equally plausible or unique options.
- Identify options that deny the patient's feelings, concerns, or needs.

Tips for Answering True/False Questions

- Watch for key words such as always, never, all or none. Qualified statements including words like these are probably false.
- If any part of the statement is false, then the entire statement is false.
- There are usually more true than false answers.
- Most true statements come right out of a textbook or lecture.
- Make yourself work quickly; don't pause to analyze too much!

Tips for Answering Matching Questions

- Match the items you are sure of first. Then match the others by a process of elimination.
- Read directions. Find out whether you are supposed to use each answer only once or any number of times.
- If each phrase can only be used once, confine your search to the matches you haven't used. In multiple use tests, give first priority to unused choices.
- Find out which column has the longest phrases. Work your way down that column, which means you'll be rereading terms in the column with the shortest entries.

Tips for Answering Short Questions

- Don't look too hard for hidden meaning. This type of question usually expects accurate recall of key words and phrases.
- Watch the blanks to determine the length of expected answers.
- Answer the question completely!

Tips for Answering Essay/Discussion Questions

- Become familiar with exam direction words, and do what the directions tell you to do.
- Predict the questions most likely to be asked and practice answering them.
- Plan before you answer. Make notes on the back of the exam sheet or in the margin. Outline your answer.
- Check your outline against the question to make sure that you are answering the question asked.
- Do not write an introduction. Answer the question directly and forcefully in the first sentence.
- Expand on the first sentence. Put down your ideas, facts, and details to support your first sentence.
- Use transitions. Transitions are often called "directional words." They point to the turn in the road that the reader should take.
- Don't save the best for last. If it is not included in your direct answer in the first few lines, your point may never become clear to the teacher.
- End with a summarizing sentence or two.
- Watch the time. If you think you may run out of time, just outline your remaining points to show the instructor that you did, in fact, have the necessary material in mind.