

Get Ready for the Test



Tests are a fact of school life. And there are good ways and not-so-good ways to study for them. You can learn how to study for tests more effectively. This guide can help you. It touches on some important things to consider and do when you're preparing for a test.

Basic Study Strategies

The best way to get ready for a test is to study new material right after it's presented. Study a little after each class!

Here are some other basic strategies:

- Look over your notes from each class period the same day the material is presented.
- Keep all your class materials—and keep them organized.
- Go to review sessions if there are any.
- Be aware of how *you* study best. Set up the right conditions so you'll get the most out of study sessions. For example, if there is too much noise, move to a quiet place. If you are restless, take a *short* break.
- Get a good night's sleep the night before a test.

Here Comes the Test!

When the teacher announces a test, you have four main jobs:

- deciding what to study
- reviewing notes, handouts, quizzes, and other course materials
- deciding what kinds of study activities will help you most
- planning a place and time to study for the test

Decide what to study. Find out how and when you will be tested.

Some tests include only topics that have been covered since the last test. Other tests include all topics covered so far. Find out which type your test will be. Read the course description or ask your teacher.

Review course materials. Your teacher may give you a study guide or an outline of what the test will cover. If not, making your own outline from notes and other course materials is a good way to begin to study for a test. Grouping ideas improves understanding. Take these steps to create an outline (see box also):

1. Skim your notes.
2. Identify a few main ideas.
3. List the main ideas. Leave space below each idea.
4. Under each main idea, list important points about that idea.
5. As you study your notes and other course materials, add details to your outline.

How Do You Set Up an Outline?

On the left is a model outline using terms that describe what an outline includes. On the right is a basic outline that could be used to explain the features of a story.

Unit Title	Story Features
I. Main idea	I. Basic elements
A. Important point	A. Character
1. Detail	1. Main
2. Detail	2. Supporting
B. Important point	B. Setting
1. Detail	1. Time
2. Detail	2. Place
C. Important point	C. Conflict
D. Important point	D. Resolution
II. Main idea	II. Other features
A. Important point	A. Genre
B. Important point	B. Point of view

Make a study plan. Now that you know what you have to study, you can make a study plan. Use your calendar and plan hour by hour what you will study and when. Divide large tasks into small chunks. Make sure to schedule work that is due in other classes.

- Study the most important and the hardest material first. That way you have time to get help if you need it.
- Be realistic about how much you can study in one session. Several one- or two-hour sessions will be more effective than one giant one. Plan study breaks. During breaks, stretch, walk, or have a healthy snack. When you return to work, you'll be more focused.

Study actively! Many people learn best when they are active. If you are one of these people, find ways to be active while studying. Here are some examples of what you can do:

- List questions about anything that's confusing you. Use your textbook and notes. Or ask a classmate to explain. If you still don't understand, ask the teacher for help.
- Rewrite your notes several times, making them simpler each time. Finish by making an outline without looking at the notes. Use key words for the main ideas. Fill in the details.
- Create visual tools. Sketch, diagram or make a table or chart to express the ideas you need to learn.
- Record your review and then listen as you play it back.
- Make flash cards for studying important facts.
- Make up a quiz and give it to a classmate or older family member or friend.
- Teach a classmate or another person something you need to learn and remember.
- Make memory aids such as songs, rhymes, or acronyms for lists of information or steps in a process (see box).
- Apply what you've learned. For example, create math problems and solve them; make a timeline of key events in the life of a family member.

Active Studying: Make Memory Aids

An acronym is a word made from the first letters of other words. You can create acronyms to remember lists. For example, for the names of the Great Lakes, you can use *HOMES*:

Huron
Ontario
Michigan
Erie
Superior

A sentence or phrase may work too. For instance, to remember the order of operations in math, use *My Dear Aunt Sally*:

Multiply
Divide
Add
Subtract

Choose a time and place to study. Most students need a quiet, orderly space that's just for studying. But different students have different needs. It's important to think about what kind of a learner *you* are and how *you* study best. That will help you make good decisions about your study space.

Learning good study strategies and putting them into practice will boost your chances of success when test time comes around!