

Getting Ready For Your Test

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Reading

Divide your material into reasonable “chunks” for reading & studying purposes. Usually these chunks occur naturally by topics or chapters. However, you might have to break some material down into smaller, more reasonable chunks of study. When reading for comprehension and learning, follow the steps below.

1. Read each entire “chunk” or chapter through to the end without highlighting or taking notes. In general, people who begin taking notes or highlighting on the first read-through don’t have a good idea as to what items are important or critical yet.
2. Read through a second time, this time taking notes. Writing out key points, definitions, etc. stores this information in a different part of the brain.
3. Create a list of concepts/terms that are emphasized in text. If particular concepts are given emphasis in the manual (bold, underlined, “*Important!*”, etc.), then they are probably key concepts.

The optimal size for memorization is 3-4 units.

Examples of 3-4 unit “chunking”

Serial Numbers	X3J9 – 90H1 – 15PA – 6UIM
Credit Card Numbers	4617-1783-6782-1234
Mathematical Numbers	108,000,000
Phone Numbers	(767) 891-1234
Company Slogans	Just Do It
Car Models	RX450 (pronounced “R-X-4-50”)

Taking Notes

Use highlighters, tabs, diagrams, etc. to indicate emphasis or something you know you will need to find later.

Identify the RESOURCES that you can refer to later for clarification or further study.

- Manuals
- Websites
- Statues

Organize your notes often, each day. Do this while the material is still fresh in your mind.

Studying to Remember

Schedule time to study over a period of time. Don't try to read and or learn everything one week before the exam. You will retain more information if you devote time to studying a little each night weeks in advance, with an in-depth review the week before the exam.

Also try to embed the info in your brain using multiple methods. Your brain stores information acquired in different ways in different regions of the brain. The more methods you use to acquire and study information, the easier it is for you to retrieve that information later.

- ✓ Write notes (flash cards)
- ✓ Quiz yourself
- ✓ Q & A out loud
- ✓ Mental images

Do as many practice tests and sample problems as you can. Repetition is your friend!

Test Strategies

Multiple Choice

1. Cover answers while reading the question
2. Read the question carefully
3. Try to answer the question without looking at answers
4. Uncover & read *all* answers
5. Choose best response by
 - ✓ Searching for correct answer, or
 - ✓ By process of elimination

Skip the difficult questions, but flag them to remind you to come back to them when you have time.

- Decoding difficult questions...
 - Caution words – *never, always, or none* (circle them?)
 - Watch for *not, unless, or none*. Those “negatives” can be confusing.
 - Try rephrasing question in your own words so it makes sense to you.
- If you have to guess, do so strategically
 - First cross off answers you know to be wrong
 - Re-read question, considering remaining answers only

Example 1

When driving at night, when should you use your high-beam headlights?

- a) always while driving
- b) preferably never
- c) whenever it is safe and legal
- d) only on interstate highways

Example 2

What are the three main elements of the minimum design standards? (circle only three)

- a) Definitions of terms used in notes and tables
- b) References to key documents such as the AASHTO Green Book
- c) Construction standards
- d) Notes referred to in tables
- e) Federal requirements
- f) Tables of values for criteria

Essay and Short Answer

- Read question thoroughly and create a bullet list of required information/answers.
- Create an outline of what you can or want to say about these topics. Your answer will be more organized.
- If the question asks for facts, do not provide your opinion.
- Focus on one main idea per paragraph.

Time Management

& other tips

At the beginning of the exam (or each section) determine how many questions you must get correct for each section in order to pass the test. If you do not even answer that number of questions for each section, you will fail the exam no matter how many questions you answered correctly.

- How many segments are there to the exam?
- How much time do you get for each section?
- What do you need (%) to pass the exam?
 - For each section
 - Entire exam
- Calculate the time you can/should spend on each section.
- Calculate the number of questions for EACH section that you must get correct in order to pass.

For example, I have 4 hours to answer questions for 4 topics (sections). I need to answer at least 70% correct in order to pass each section. With 4 sections, I would have 1 hour for each. I would want to make sure that I watch

the clock (set timer on phone if you can) so that I don't spend 2 hours on one section alone. If I did that, I would have only 2 hours left to rush through the other sections.

In addition, I know that I have to get 70% for each section. For each section then, I would calculate the number of questions that I had to answer correctly (get 100% for each question) in order to pass the section.

Example: Section 1 has 30 questions, section 2 has 35, section 3 has 25, and section 4 has 30. How many questions must I answer correctly for each section just to pass the test?

Section 1 $30 \times 70\% = 21$

Section 2 $35 \times 70\% = 24.5$

Section 3 $25 \times 70\% = 17.5$

Section 4 $30 \times 70\% = 21$

If you are not able to answer at least this number of questions for each section, you will have failed that section. Since you cannot fail any one section of the exam, you will have failed the exam. Manage your time!!

Miscellaneous Tips

- Gather ALL materials you'll need for the exam the night before.
- Relax & breathe, feed the brain oxygen.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Read all directions carefully.
- If there's time, review answers you found difficult.
- Answer questions strategically
 1. Easy questions first, then
 2. Questions with biggest point value

Techniques for Open Book Exam

- You are evaluated on understanding and problem solving ability rather than recall and memorization
- Do not underestimate the preparation needed for an open book exam
 - Your time will be limited
 - Organize in order to quickly find data, quotes, examples, and/or arguments you use in your answers