Test Taking Strategies

General Test Logistics:

- Read each question thoroughly
- Don’t read too much into the question. Base your response on the information provided in the statement and not additional knowledge you may have about the topic.
- Skim through the test to know how to budget your time
- Manage your time by answering questions you know first
- If you are unsure of the answer, narrow your options and make an educated guess
- If you’re conflicted by two possibilities, write your reason for choosing an answer in the margins.
- Check your work before you hand in your test

True/False Questions: Assume a statement is true until you can determine it to be false.

1. Absolute statements such as “always,” “never,” “all,” “none,” “everyone” tend to be false because they don’t allow for exceptions.
   Example: Jedi knights are never evil.

2. Reason statements such as “because,” “therefore,” “consequently,” “the cause of,” or “as a result of” tend to be false.
   Example: Obesity is the result of overeating.

3. Statements with qualifiers such as “appears,” “seems,” “suggests,” “generally,” tend to be true.
   Example: An Instructor’s personal preference generally determines which type of test they give.

4. Watch out for negative or double negative statements that can cause confusion to the reader.
   Example: “It is not untrue that Columbus sailed the ocean blue.” Cross out the underlined words to read the sentence correctly.

5. If you don’t know the answer, take an educated guess - it’s 50/50.

Fill-in-the-Blank:

1. Read the questions carefully and look for clues (as, an, the, and, these) that make your response grammatically correct.
2. Be sure your answers make sense
3. Don’t leave blanks - If you can’t think of the exact work, write a synonym for partial credit.

Examples:

1. In October, ______, the stock market “crashed” to begin the Great Depression.
   *The comma after a month indicates that you need to add a year (1929)*

2. An ______ person can be trusted.
   *The “an” let you know that the missing word in the second item is an adjective that begins with a vowel or vowel sound. A logical choice would be the word honest.*

3. The U.S. entered World War II in 1941 after ________planes attacked American naval Ships at _______ _________.
   *This question asked for an adjective that describes planes (Japanese) and a noun that names the location of the naval ship (Pearl Harbor).*
Multiple-Choice Questions:

- Attempt to answer the question without looking at the options.
- Read all the answer choices before selecting your answer.
- Eliminate the distractors.
- Answer the questions you know first and then go back to the difficult questions.
- When guessing, pick an option in the middle with the most words.
- Options that contain “all of the above” or “none of the above” are often the correct choices.
- If options are similar, such as North Dakota or South Dakota, one of the options is probably the correct answer.
- If one answer has more details or seems more complete, then it could be the correct answer.
- If the first option is correct, look at the last option to make sure it’s not “all of the above.”

1. Lookout for statements with absolute words such as, “always,” and “never,” or extreme modifiers such as, “good,” and “bad” as they are almost always incorrect because they do not allow for exceptions.

   **Example: Elderly patients experiencing dementia**
   
   a. Are always diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.
   b. Only lose their verbal skills
   c. Are never able to reside in their own homes
   d. Sometimes exhibit aggressive behavior

   *The only answer that does not contain an absolute word or an extreme modifier is “d.”*

2. Watch out for questions that say, “all but one” or “except for one.” This means the majority of the options are correct.

   **Example: All but one of the following Americans landed safely on the moon.**
   
   a. Neil Armstrong
   b. Edwin Aldrin, Jr
   c. Jackie Robinson
   d. Michael Collins

   *In this case, the correct answer is “c.” Jackie Robinson was a famous baseball player, but he never landed on the moon.*

3. Be attentive to double negatives that can make a statement true rather than false.

   **Example: In some states it is not illegal to**
   
   a. Transport heroin
   b. Manufacture LSD
   c. Use Marijuana
   d. Sell Cocaine

   *Not illegal means it is legal in this question so “c” is the correct answer.*

4. If two options are the same, you will know that neither is correct.

   **Example: A polar bear can run up to**
   
   a. 1.5 miles per hour
   b. 5 miles per hour
   c. 15 miles per hour
   d. 1 ½ miles per hour

   *The correct answer will be selected between “b” and “c” because “a” and “d” are the same.*

5. When statements contain digits, the answer usually is not the extreme, but rather a middle number.

   **Example: A pound is equal to**
   
   a. 1.6 oz
   b. 6 oz
   c. 16 oz
   d. 66 oz

   *The correct answer is “c” as “a” and “d” are extreme numbers.*
**Essay Questions:**
Answering essay questions requires total recall, organization, grammar, and creativity.

- Write down key words to help formulate your thoughts. A brief outline can help ensure that your answer flows smoothly.
- Use the terminology from the course in developing your answer.
- Provide evidence to support your ideas. Be concise and to the point. Unnecessary repetition can lower your score.
- Some questions have multiple parts, so you need to address each part of the question, even if you only use one sentence to do so.
- Never leave any questions unanswered unless there is a penalty for wrong answers. This could cost points that severely impact your grade.
- If you use dates, be certain they are correct. If you are unsure whether the year is 1876 or 1886, say “toward the end of the 19th century.”

Use the principles of writing from your INQ 110 class. Be sure your answer has an introduction, body, and conclusion. You may use the question itself to introduce your response. Things to watch for include: correct spelling, subject/verb agreement, correct use of pronouns, logic, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, correct phrases, transition words, etc.

- Proof read all your work.
- If you feel you are running out of time, outline the main points of your answer. The instructor will be able to see that you have some knowledge about the topic and you may receive partial credit for your answer.

**Essay Terminology:**
Understand what you are being asked to write in an essay by learning the definitions of the words below.

- **Analyze** - To divide something into parts in order to understand it better. Show how the parts work together to produce the overall pattern.
- **Compare** - To look at the characteristics or qualities of several things and identify their similarities or differences. Do not just describe the traits; be sure you define how the things are alike and how they are different.
- **Contrast** - To identify the differences between things.
- **Criticize/Critique** - To analyze and judge something. Criticism can be positive, negative or both. A criticism should generally contain your own judgements (supported by evidence) and those of other authorities who can support your point.
- **Define** - To give the meaning of a word or expression. Giving an example sometimes helps to clarify a definitions, but an example by itself is not a definition.
- **Describe** - To give a general verbal sketch of something, in narrative or other form.
- **Discuss** - To examine or analyze something in a broad and detailed way. Discussion often includes identifying the important questions related to an issue and attempting to answer these questions. A good discussion explores all relevant evidence and information.
- **Evaluate** - To discuss the strengths and weaknesses of something. Evaluation is similar to criticism, but the word evaluate places more stress on the idea of how well something meets a certain standard of fulfills some specific purpose.
- **Explain** - To clarify something. Explanation generally focus on why or how something has come about.
- **Interpret** - To explain the meaning of something. In science, you might explain what an experiment shows and what conclusions can be drawn from it. In a literature course, you might explain or interpret what a poem means beyond the literal meaning of the words.
- **Justify** - To argue in support of some decision or conclusion by showing sufficient evidence or reasoning its favor. Try to support your argument with both logic and concrete examples.
- **Narrate** - To relate a series of events in the order in which they occurred. Generally, you will also be asked to explain something about the events you are narrating.
- **Outline** - To present a series of main points in appropriate order. Some instructors want an outline with roman numerals from main points, followed by letters for supporting details. If in doubt, ask the instructor.
- **Prove** - To give a convincing logical argument and evidence in support of some statement.
- **Review** - To summarize and comment on the main parts of a problem or a series of statements. A review question usually also asks you to evaluate or criticize.
- **Summarize** - To give information in brief form, omitting examples and details. A summary is short yet covers all important points.
- **Trace** - To narrate a course of events. Where possible, you should show connection from one event to the next.