

One Minute Test-taking Tips



Excerpted/modified from book HOW THE BEST HANDLE STRESS*
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The “Testing Triathlon”: Being Fact Smart; Test Smart; Stress Smart.

Top test performance requires developing **three different types of smartness**, tapping into different “brain-domains”: Students must be - **Fact-Smart (left-brain); Test-Smart (Left & Right-Brain)** and **Stress-Smart (Right-Brain)**. If one thinks of testing today as a Triathlon, success is assured. Test-Triathlon training could begin three months before the big event. Build skills with several short sessions weekly.

Of course, you use many parts of your brain when thinking, but different parts are used to varying degrees based on the task at hand. This is like the fact that you use much of your body just to drink a glass of water, but different parts of your body are more or less involved (eyes, hand, arm, shoulder, back muscles and hopefully your mouth).

TOP TEN TEST-TAKING TIPS (THREE MONTHS PRIOR TO TEST)

*Left-brain training to become **Fact-Smart**:*

- 1) Teach Positively: Students learn more when they like the teacher (William James-Harvard, 1899).
- 2) Teach memory mechanics. The basic rule is repetition, repetition, repetition.
- 3) Require students to develop their own flashcards and stack the deck with only the memorized facts.
- 4) Answer the core question, without being tripped up by “word traps” (irrelevant details) or generalizations (always, never, everywhere).

*Both-brain training to become **Test-Smart**:*

- 5) Be Clerically Correct: For the young, when in doubt, check their skills out (attention, handwriting, reading skills).
- 6) Provide “Test Rehearsals” (if approved). All great performances start with rehearsal.

*Right-brain training to become **Stress-Smart**:*

- 7) Test for Test-Anxiety. “Stress is sand in the machinery of thought.” All classes will have “test-anxious.” “Test-anxious” or “math-anxious” under-achieve on tests. As adults they avoid rewarding jobs requiring many tests or using complex math. “Computer-phobics” short-circuit their own growth by just plain refusing to acquire 21st century skills. The “anxious” resist change.
- 8) Consume “Food for thought” just before the test session. Eat fruit, followed by a drink of water.
- 9) Relax: See your mental health professional on test-anxiety reduction tips. Use humor to relax. See a movie the night before the “big event.”
- 10) Learn from those who do Best-on-tests. Test-Prep can boost test scores by 10%! (Scruggs & Mastropieri, Purdue University, 1992).

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