

HOW TO GET AN "A"



STUDY SKILLS

FOR MR. VAN VALKENBURG'S CLASS AND BEYOND.



Study Skills
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* Content for this packet was taken with permission from the following: <http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/> ; if you need any further information please consult this source.

*Editor’s note: This packet does not guarantee you an “A” in any class. The skills in it are there for you to develop so that you can achieve at your highest level. Students who practice, develop, and use these skills on a regular basis consistently get higher grades than those who do not.

Learning without thought is labor lost. - Confucius

15 Suggestions on Influencing Teachers

How you communicate with your teacher affects how well you do in a course. In general, teachers are likely to be impressed with students who show a genuine interest in their course material and ask good questions. The best way to get on your teacher's good side is to be an "interested" student.

The following are some strategies to demonstrate your interest and curiosity:

- ★ Don't criticize, condemn, or complain to the teacher about his or her performance; rather focus on, and discuss the material and your understanding of it.
- ★ Let the teacher know what you appreciate about the course.
- ★ Smile.
- ★ Know and use the teacher's name.
- ★ Don't whine.
- ★ Listen to what the teacher has to say about himself or herself.
- ★ Talk in terms of what the teacher is interested in.
- ★ Let the teacher know that you think he or she is important.
- ★ Avoid arguing.
- ★ If you are wrong, admit it quickly and sincerely.
- ★ Ask questions rather than give orders.
- ★ Try honestly to see the teacher's point of view.
- ★ Let the teacher know that you sincerely want to do well in the course.
- ★ Always have the course textbook (or binder) in your hand whenever you see the teacher.
- ★ **Hand in all assignments on time throughout the semester.**

Effective Habits for Effective Study

You can prepare yourself to succeed in your studies. Try to develop and appreciate the following habits:

- ☞ Take responsibility for yourself. – Responsibility is recognition that in order to succeed you can make decisions about your priorities, your time, and your resources.
- ☞ Center yourself around your values and principles. – Don't let your friends and acquaintances dictate what you consider important.
- ☞ Put first things first. – Follow up on the priorities you have set for yourself, and don't let others, or other interests, distract you from your goals.
- ☞ Discover your key productivity periods and places. – Morning, afternoon, evening; study places where you can be the most focused and productive. Prioritize these for your most difficult study challenges.
- ☞ First understand others, then attempt to be understood. – When you have an issue with a teacher, for example a questionable grade, an assignment deadline extension, put yourself in the teacher's place. Now ask yourself how you can best make your argument given his/her situation.
- ☞ Look for better solutions to problems. – For example, if you don't understand the course material, don't just reread the material. Try something else! Consult with the teacher, a tutor, an academic advisor, a classmate, a study group, or your schools' tutoring center.
- ☞ Look to continually challenge yourself.

Concentration

The art or practice of concentration, no matter if studying biology or playing pool, is to eliminate distraction and focus on the task at hand. If you find that you read through material and suddenly discover that you have no idea about what you've just read, or if you attend class and have difficulty paying attention to what is being said, these tips may help.

- ◆ Stick to a routine. Have an efficient study schedule.
- ◆ For a study break, do something different from what you've been doing (e.g., walk around if you've been sitting) and do it in a different area.
- ◆ Avoid daydreaming by asking yourself questions about the material as you study it.
- ◆ Before lectures, look over the notes of the previous lecture and read the course material pertaining to the lecture so that you can anticipate the main ideas that the teacher will cover.
- ◆ Show outward interest during lectures (attentive expression and posture) to self motivate internal interest.
- ◆ Resist distractions by focusing on the teacher through listening and note taking.

Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is “the careful, deliberate determination of whether we should accept, reject, or suspend judgement about a claim, and the degree of confidence with which we accept or reject it.”

- From **Critical Thinking** by Moore and Parker.

Strategies for Critical Reading

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the issue?
- What conclusion does the author reach about the issue?
- What are the author’s reasons for believing as he does?
Be alert to bad reasoning (i.e., pity, fear, misuse or statistics, etc.) that can fool you.
- Has the author used facts or opinions?
Facts can be proven.
Opinions cannot be proven and may or may not be based on sound reasoning.
- Has the author used neutral words or emotional words?
Critical readers look beyond the language to see if the reasons are clear.

Characteristics of Critical Thinkers:

- ☺ They are honest with themselves.
- ☺ They resist manipulation.
- ☺ They overcome confusion.
- ☺ They ask questions.
- ☺ They base judgments on evidence.
- ☺ They look for connections between subjects.
- ☺ They are intellectually independent.

Using Memory Effectively

Acronyms and Acrostics: (For information involving key words)

- ▶ **An Acronym** is an invented combination of letters. Each letter is a cue to how an idea you need to remember. For Example: PASS is an acronym for how to use a fire extinguisher – Pull Pin, Aim, Squeeze, Sweep.
- ▶ **An Acrostic** is an invented sentence where the first letter of each word is a cue to an idea you need to remember. Example: EVERY GOOD BOY DESERVES FUN is an acrostic to remember the order of G-clef notes on sheet music – E, G, B, D, F.

Memory Techniques and Mnemonics (visit <http://www.demon.co.uk/mindtool/memory.html> for more information)

Rhyme Keys: (For ordered or unordered lists)

- First, memorize key words that can be associated with numbers. For instance, bun with one; shoe with two, tree with three, door with four, hive with five, etc.
- Next create an image of the items you need to remember with key words. For example, if you had to remember the four basic food groups – dairy products; meat, fish, and poultry; grains; and fruit and vegetables – imagine cheese on a bun, livestock with shoes on, a sack of grain suspended in a tree and opening a door to a room stocked with fruits and vegetables.

The Method of Loci: (for approximately twenty items)

- Select any location that you have spent a lot of time in and have easily memorized. Imagine yourself walking through the location, selecting clearly defined places – the door, sofa, refrigerator, shelf, etc. Imagine yourself putting objects that you need to remember into each of these places by walking through this location in a direct path. Again you need a standard direct path and clearly defined locations for objects to facilitate the retrieval of these objects. For example if you had to remember George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Richard Nixon, you could imagine walking up to the door of your location and seeing a dollar bill stuck in the door; when you open the door Jefferson is reclining on the sofa, and Nixon is eating out of the refrigerator.

The Keyword Method: (for foreign language vocabulary)

- First, after considering the foreign word you need to remember, select a key word in English the sounds like the foreign word.
- Next, imagine an image which involves the key word with the English meaning of the foreign word. For example, consider the Spanish word “cabina” which means “phone booth.” For the English keyword, you might think of “cab in a . . .” You could then invent an image of a cab trying to fit in a phone booth. When you see the word “cabina” on the test, you should be able to recall the image of the cab and you should be able to retrieve the definition “phone booth.”

The Image-Name Technique: (for remembering names)

- Simply invent any relationship between the name and the physical characteristics of the person. For example, if you had to remember Shirley Temple’s name, you might ingrain the name in memory by noticing that she has “curly” (rhymes with Shirley) hair around her temples.

Chaining: (for ordered or unordered lists)

- Create a story where each word or idea you have to remember cues the next idea you need to recall. If you had to remember the words Napoleon, ear, door, and Germany, you could invent a story of Napoleon with his ear to a door listening to people speak in German.

AVOIDING PROCRASTINATION

The only way to avoid procrastination is to do the project at hand.

To do the project at hand, you have to become motivated.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why am I doing this?
- What if I don’t do this?
- What will happen if I do this later?

If you answer these questions honestly, you will realize the importance of beginning your task now.

Reward and Punish Yourself

At the completion of your task have a reward ready to give yourself. If you fail to complete the project, deny yourself that reward.

Scare Yourself

Remember there is nobody here to hold your hand. If you fail to complete your tasks, you will fail. The fault and consequences will be yours alone. It is much easier to have fun when there are no projects in the back of your mind. Finish your projects so your fun time will be more enjoyable.

"MURDER"

A Study System

- ✓ **Mood:** Set a *positive mood* for yourself to study in. Select the appropriate time, environment, and attitude;
- ✓ **Understand:** Mark any information **you don't understand** in a particular unit; Keep a focus on one unit or a manageable group of exercises;
- ✓ **Recall:** After studying the unit, stop and put what you have learned **into your own words**;
- ✓ **Digest:** Go back to what you did not understand and **reconsider the information**; Contact external expert sources (e.g., other books or a teacher) if you still cannot understand it;
- ✓ **Expand:** In this step, ask **three kinds of questions** concerning the studied material
 - 1) If I could speak to the author, what questions would I ask, or what criticism would I offer?
 - 2) How could I apply this material to what I am interested in?
 - 3) How could I make this information interesting and understandable to other students?
- ✓ **Review:** **Go over the material you've covered**; Remember what strategies helped you understand and/or retain information; Apply these strategies to your future studying.

Taking Notes From a Textbook

First: Read a section of your textbook chapter.

- Read just enough to keep an understanding of the material.
- Do not take notes, but rather focus on understanding the material.

It is tempting to take notes as you are reading the first time, but this is not an efficient technique: you are likely to take down too much information and simply copy without understanding.

Second: Review the material.

- Locate the main ideas, as well as important sub-points.
- Set the book aside.
- Paraphrase this information: putting the textbook information into your own words forces you to become actively involved with the material.

Third: Write the paraphrased ideas as your notes.

- Do not copy information directly from the textbook.
- Add only enough detail to understand.

Fourth: Review, and compare your notes with the text, and ask yourself if you truly understand.

Reading Difficult Material

- * **Read the title and the first paragraph.**
 - If there is a summary at the end of the chapter, read it.
 - Get a grasp of how the material is organized.
 - If you need more background, seek another source.
 - Now decide if you have enough background and begin reading.

- * **Look for main ideas.**
 - Look for titles, headings, and subheadings.
 - Pick out topic sentences.
 - Utilize graphs, charts, and diagrams.
 - Take notes while you read. (See taking notes from a text book, page 5)

- * **Look up words.**
 - Look up words whose meanings are important to your understanding of the material, but you cannot discern from the context.

- * **Monitor your comprehension.**
 - Periodically stop and ask yourself, "What have I learned?"
 - Connect this to what you already know.

- * **Reread.**
 - If you are not comprehending an idea, go back and reread.
 - Restate difficult ideas in your own words.

- * **Read to the end.**
 - Do not get discouraged and stop reading.
 - Ideas can become clearer the more you read. When you finish reading, review to see what you have learned, and reread those ideas that are not clear.

Preparing for Classroom Learning

Compared to classrooms in some countries, United States' classrooms tend to be informal. There are, however, some very important basic rules:

Before Class:

- » **Do your homework!**
- » Review your notes from the previous lecture and reading for the day.
- » Communicate immediately with teachers about any study problems.
- » Focus on the task at hand before class: take a moment of silence to gather your thoughts and mentally prepare yourself for the topic at hand.
- » Write any objectives that come to mind at the head of your notepaper. (For Example: preparing for a test, understanding a particular concept, gaining a good foundation on a topic, understanding of reviewing the readings.)

In Class:

- ☞ **Arrive on time for class.** Teachers do not take lateness lightly.
- ☞ Avoid distractions that may interfere with your concentration (daydreaming, looking around the room, talking to a friend, passing notes, dozing.)
- ☞ Evaluate as you listen:
 - Decide what is important and should be placed in your notes and what can be left out;
 - Listen long enough to be sure you understand what was said before writing;
 - Ask clarifying questions (but wait for “breaks” in the instructor’s stream.)
- ☞ Review your class objective(s) throughout the class period.
- ☞ Write a “to do” list including assignments; reviewing difficult concepts; joining study groups; making appointments with a study pal, tutor, or the teacher. One resource often overlooked is a classmate who seems to have a good grasp of the material. If it seems appropriate, seek the individual out for help.

Taking Notes in Lectures

A good strategy of note taking in class will pay off in terms of effectiveness and time savings.

The keys to good note taking are the five “R’s” from the Cornell Notetaking System (Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, See page 8):

Record * Reduce * Recite * Reflect * Review

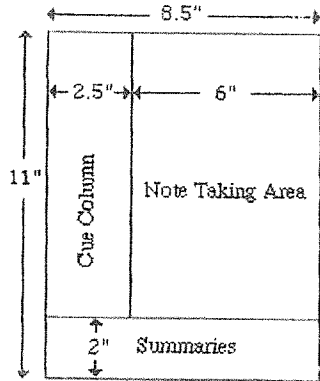
You can develop your own system based on a few elementary strategies:

- 1) Get a good three ring binder, binder dividers, and plenty of paper. This will enable you to add, delete, and re-sequence pages and materials.
- 2) Develop an organizational system, include:
 - a) headings,
 - b) the date,
 - c) any guest speakers’ names,
 - d) a system of “sections” to organize your notes, including word lists, handouts, assignments, etc.
 - e) leave plenty of white space for additions if needed

Think in terms of three main sections: (explained further on page 8)

- 1) A central space for identifying the main points, capturing the main ideas, not quoting the lecturer.
- 2) A marginal space for editing or annotating what you have written, linking information from the text or other sources, adding definitions.
- 3) A “condensing” or summary section.

THE CORNELL NOTE TAKING SYSTEM



Note Taking Area: Record lecture as fully and as meaningfully as possible.

Cue Column: As you're taking notes, keep cue column empty. Soon after the lecture, reduce your notes to concise jottings as clues for Reciting, Reviewing, and Reflecting.

Summaries: Sum up each page of your notes in a sentence or two.

This format provides the perfect opportunity for following through with the 5 R's of note-taking:

Record

During the lecture, record in the main column as many meaningful facts and ideas as you can. Write legibly. Do not try to write what the teacher is saying word for word, write ideas.

Reduce

As soon after as possible, summarize these facts and ideas concisely in the cue column. Summarizing clarifies meanings and relationships, reinforces continuity, and strengthens memory.

Recite

Cover the note taking area, using only your jottings in the cue column, say over the facts and ideas of the lecture as fully as you can, not mechanically, but in your own words. Then, verify what you have said.

Reflect

Draw out opinions from your notes and use them as a starting point for your own reflections on the course and how it relates to your other courses. Reflection will help prevent ideas from being inert and soon forgotten.

Review

Spend 10 minutes every week in quick review of your notes, and you will retain most of what you have learned.

Paying Attention in the Classroom

If you attend class and have difficulty paying attention to what is being said:

- Before lectures, look over notes of the previous lecture and read the course material pertaining to the lecture.
- If you have questions about material from the previous class or text, ask the teacher before school about them.
- Resist distractions by focusing on the teacher through listening and note taking.
- Show outward interest during lectures (attentive expression and posture) to self-motivate internal interest.
- Take good notes!
- When appropriate: ask a question, ask for more clarity, or engage an instructor and the class in dialogue.
- Schedule time to go over lecture material immediately after class/school.
- Remember: Forgetting is the greatest within 24 hours without review.
- Schedule a weekly review for each course.

Test Preparation

To do well on a test you must first learn the material and then review it before the test.
These are techniques to better understand your material:

Learning and Over-Learning:

- Review your notes soon after class.
- Review notes briefly before the next class.
- Schedule some time each week for a longer review.

Reviewing

- Organize your notes, texts, and assignments.
- Estimate the hours you'll need to review materials.
- Draw up a schedule that blocks units of time and material.
- Test yourself on the material.
- Finish your studying the day before the exam.

Anticipating Test Content

- ★ **Pay particular attention to any study guides/word lists**, that the teacher hands out in class before the exam. For example: key points, particular chapters or parts of chapters, handouts, etc.
- ★ **Ask the instructor what to anticipate on the test** if he or she does not volunteer the information.
- ★ **Pay particular attention – just prior to the exam –** to points the teacher brings up during class lectures.
- ★ **Generate a list of possible questions** you would ask if you were making the exam, then see if you can answer the questions.
- ★ **Confer with other students** to predict what will be on the test.
- ★ **Pay particular attention to clues** that indicate a teacher might test for a particular idea, as when a teacher:
 - says something more than once
 - writes material on the board
 - pauses to review notes
 - asks questions of the class
 - says, “This will be on the test!”

Review Tools for Tests

Create study checklists.

Identify all of the material that you will be tested on – list notes, formulas, ideas, and text assignments you are accountable for. This checklist will enable you to break your studying into organized, manageable chunks, which should allow for a comprehensive review plan with minimal anxiety.

Create summary notes and “maps.”

Briefly map out the important ideas of the course and the relationships of these ideas. Summary notes should display lists and hierarchies of ideas. Creativity and a visual framework will help you recall these ideas.

Record your notes,

and significant portions of text on audio tapes so you can review material with a walkman. Having a tape of important information will enable you to study while walking or relaxing in a non-academic environment.

Create flashcards,

for definitions, formulas, or lists that you need to have memorized – put topics on one side of the card, answers on the other. Flashcards will enable you to test your ability to not only recognize important information, but also your ability to retrieve information from scratch.

Dealing with Test Anxiety

Before the test:

- ☞ Be prepared! Learn your material thoroughly.
- ☞ A program of exercise is said to sharpen the mind.
- ☞ Get a good night's sleep the night before the exam.
- ☞ Approach the exam with confidence: View the exam as an opportunity to show how much you've studied and to receive a reward for the studying you've done.
- ☞ Don't go to the exam with an empty stomach. Fresh fruits and vegetables are often recommended to reduce stress. Stressful foods can include processed foods, artificial sweeteners, carbonated soft drinks, chocolate, eggs, fried foods, junk foods, pork, red meat, sugar, white flour products, foods containing preservatives or heavy spices, and chips and similar snack foods.
- ☞ Allow yourself plenty of time, especially to do things you need to do before the test and still get there a little early.
- ☞ Relax just before the exam.

During the test:

- ☞ Read the directions carefully.
- ☞ Budget your test taking time.
- ☞ Change positions to help you relax.
- ☞ If you go blank, skip the question and go on.
- ☞ If you're taking an essay test, and you go blank on the whole test, pick a question and start writing. It may trigger the answer in your mind.
- ☞ Don't panic when students start turning in their papers. There's no reward for being the first done.

Check out local centers and resources in your school for assistance! If you are aware that you have a problem with test anxiety, be sure your teacher knows before any testing begins (and not the hour before!). There may be other options to evaluate your knowledge or performance withing the subject matter.

Organizing for Tests

Begin reviewing early.

This will give your brain time to get comfortable with the information.

Conduct short daily review sessions.

You can ease into more intense review sessions prior to major exams.

Read text assignments before lectures.

This will help you identify concepts that the professor considers important and that are already somewhat familiar.

Review notes immediately after lectures.

This will help you identify information that you do not understand while the lecture is still fresh in your memory – and other students' memories as well. When you review immediately, you'll have time to clarify information with other students.

Review with a group.

This will enable you to cover important material that you may overlook on your own.

Conduct a major review early enough

to allow for a visit to the teacher before or after school if necessary.

Break up the study tasks into manageable chunks,

especially during major reviews just prior to exams. Studying three hours in the morning and three in the evening will be more effective than studying at a six-hour stretch. *Studying while you are mentally fatigued is usually a waste of time.*

Study the most difficult material when you are most alert.

Tips for Test Taking

When you take a test, you are demonstrating your ability to understand course material, or perform certain tasks.

The test forms the basis of evaluation or judgement for your course of study.

There are many *environmental* conditions, including your own attitudes and conditions, which influence how you perform during tests.

These suggestions may help:

Come prepared; arrive early for tests.

Bring all the materials you will need such as pencils and pens, a calculator, a dictionary, and a watch. This will help you focus on the task at hand.

Stay relaxed and confident.

Remind yourself that you are well-prepared and are going to do well. Don't let yourself become *anxious*; if you feel anxious before or during a test, take several slow, deep breaths to relax. Don't talk to other students before a test; anxiety is contagious.

Be comfortable but alert.

Make sure you have enough room to work. Maintain an upright posture in your seat.

Preview the test.

Spend 10% of your test time reading through the test carefully, marking key terms and deciding how to budget your time. Plan to do the easy questions first and the most difficult questions last. As you read the questions, jot down brief notes indicating ideas you can use later in your answers.

Answer the test questions in a strategic order.

Begin by answering the easy questions you know, then those with the highest point value. The last questions you answer should be the most difficult, take the greatest amount of writing, or have the least point value.

Reserve 10% of your test time for review.

Review your test; resist the urge to turn it in as soon as you have completed all the items. Make sure you have answered all the questions. Proofread your writing for spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Check your math answers for careless mistakes. Match your actual answers for math problems against quick estimates.

Analyze your test results.

Each test can further prepare you for the next test. Decide which strategies worked for you. Identify those that didn't work well and replace them.

TRUE/FALSE TESTS

Most true/false tests contain more true answers than false answers.

- When in doubt, guess true. You have more than a 50% chance of being right.

Pay close attention to qualifiers, negatives, and long strings of statements.

- *Qualifiers are words that restrict or open up general statements.*

Words like “no, never, none, always, every, entirely, only” restrict possibilities and usually imply false statements. They imply a statement must be true 100% of the time. Qualifiers like “sometimes, often, frequently, ordinarily, generally” open up the possibilities of making accurate statements and usually indicate true answers. They make more modest claims that are more likely to reflect reality.

- *Negatives are confusing.*

If the question contains negatives, like “no, not, cannot,” circle the negative and read the sentence that remains. Decide whether that sentence is true or false. If it is true, the opposite or negative is usually false.

- *Every part of a true sentence must be true.*

If any one part of the sentence is false, the whole sentence is false despite many other true statements. Therefore read long sentences carefully and pay attention to each group of words set off by punctuation. Sentences with long strings of words are most likely – but not always – false statements.

MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS

- ✧ Read the directions carefully
- ✧ Know whether you must mark the one best correct answer or all correct answers.
- ✧ Read the stem of the question (the question itself as opposed to its options) all the way through.
- ✧ Use these options to provide you with hints about things you need to know.
- ✧ If you are uncertain of the correct answer, cross out the options you know are definitely wrong, then mark the question so that you can reconsider it at the end of the exam.
- ✧ Circle all negative words (See True/False Tests) and “100% words” within the question stem and options. 100% words are those that don’t allow for exceptions, like “all.”
- ✧ “All of the above” answers are often correct. If you know two of three of the options are correct, “all of the above” is a strong possibility.
- ✧ If you’re not sure about a number answer, toss out the high and low and consider the middle range numbers.
- ✧ If you have not ideas of the answer check for “look alike” options to find what you consider the best answer among them; check for the most inclusive option – the option that contains the most information.

Short Answer Tests

A teacher's primary purpose in giving a short answer test is to cover the material. Go over your notes and the assigned reading to do the following:

- ♪ **Prepare for the test** by studying off of summary sheets that are packed with information within condensed space. Try to categorize the material.
- ♪ **Use grammatical clues** within a statement as hints to the correct answer.
- ♪ **If you can think of several answers** for a blank or short answer question, let the teacher know. The teacher may give you a clue to the correct answer he/she's looking for.
- ♪ **A guess made with common sense** could get you more test points than if you leave an answer blank. Don't be a smart aleck if you guess.
- ♪ **Write your short answers in simple, telegraphic sentences.** Packing as much information as you can is more important than literary style.

THE ESSAY TYPE EXAM ORGANIZATION AND NEATNESS HAVE MERIT.

Before writing:

Set up a time schedule to answer each question and to review/edit all questions.

- If six questions are to be answered in sixty minutes, allow yourself only seven minutes for each.
- If questions are "weighted," prioritize that into your time allocation for each question.
- When the time is up for one question, stop writing, leave space, and begin the next question. The incomplete answers can be completed during the review time.
- Six incomplete answers will usually receive more credit than three, complete ones.

Read through the questions once and note if you have any choice in answering questions.

- Pay attention to how the question is phrased, or to the directives, or words such as "compare, contrast, criticize," etc. See their definitions in "Essay Terms."

- Answers will come to mind immediately for some questions. **Write down their key words**, listings, etc., as they are fresh in mind. Otherwise these ideas may be blocked (or be unavailable) when the time comes to write the later questions. This will reduce "clutching" or panic (anxiety, actually fear which disrupts thoughts.)

Writing and Answering:

- Begin with a strong first sentence that states the main idea of your essay. Continue this first paragraph by presenting key points.
- Develop your argument.
 - Begin each paragraph with a key point from the introduction
 - Develop each point in a complete paragraph.
 - Use transitions, or enumerate, to connect your points.

- Hold to your time allocation and organization.

- Avoid very definite statements when possible; a qualified statement connotes a philosophic attitude, the mark of an educated person.

- Qualify answers when in doubt. It is better to say "toward the end of the 19th century" than to say "in 1894" when you can't remember, whether it's 1884 or 1894. In many cases, the approximate time is all that is wanted; unfortunately 1894 though approximate, may be incorrect and will usually be marked accordingly.

- Summarize in your last paragraph. Restate your central idea and indicate why it is important

- Before attempting to answer a question, put it into your own words.

- Make a brief outline for each question. *Teachers are influenced by compactness, completeness, and clarity of an organized answer. Writing in hope that the right answer will turn up is time consuming and usually futile. To know a little and to present that little well is, by and large, superior to knowing much and presenting it poorly – when judged by the grade received.

Review:

- Complete questions left incomplete.
- Review all questions.
- Review, edit, correct - spelling, dates, numbers.
- Not enough time? Outline your answers.

Definitions of Terms or Directives for Essays, Reports, and Answering Questions

These words are "directives" and ask you to answer, or present information, in a particular way. Review these, and most of all note that there are different ways of answering a question or writing a paper!

Compare:

Examine qualities, or characteristics, to discover resemblances "Compare" is usually stated as "compare with": you are to emphasize similarities, although differences may be mentioned.

Contrast:

Stress dissimilarities, differences, or unlikeness of things, qualities, events, or problems.

Criticize:

Express your judgement or correctness or merit. Discuss the limitations and good points or contributions of the plan or work in question.

Define:

Definitions call for concise, clear, authoritative meanings. Details are not required but limitations of the definition should be briefly cited. You must keep in mind the class to which a thing belongs and whatever differentiates the particular object from all others in the class.

Describe:

In a descriptive answer you should recount, characterize, sketch or relate in narrative form.

Diagram:

For a question which specifies a diagram you should present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally you are expected to label the diagram and in some cases add a brief explanation or description.

Discuss:

The term discuss, which appears often in essay questions, directs you to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations, pro and con, regarding the problems or items involved. This type of question calls for a complete and entailed answers.

Enumerate:

The word enumerate specifies a list or outline form of reply. In such questions you should recount, one by one, in concise form, the points required.

Evaluate:

In an evaluation question you are expected to present a careful appraisal of the problem stressing both advantages and limitations. Evaluation implies authoritative and, to a lesser degree, a personal appraisal of both contributions and limitations.

Explain:

In explanatory answers it is imperative that you clarify and interpret the material you present. In such an answer it is best to state the "how or why," reconcile any differences in opinion or experimental results, and, where possible, state causes. The aim is to make plain conditions which give rise to whatever you are examining.

Illustrate:

A question which asks you to illustrate usually requires you to explain or clarify your answer to the problem by presenting a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example.

Interpret:

An interpretation question to one requiring explanation. You are expected to translate, exemplify, solve, or comment upon the subject and usually to give your judgement or reaction to the problem.

Justify:

When you are instructed to justify your answer, you must prove or show grounds for decisions. In such an answer, evidence should be presented in convincing form.

List:

Listing is similar to enumeration. You are expected in such questions to present an itemized series or tabulation. Such answers should always be given in concise form.

Outline:

An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

Prove:

A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experimental evidence or by logical reasoning.

Relate:

In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

Review:

A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

State:

In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear, narrative form. Details and usually illustrations, or examples, may be omitted.

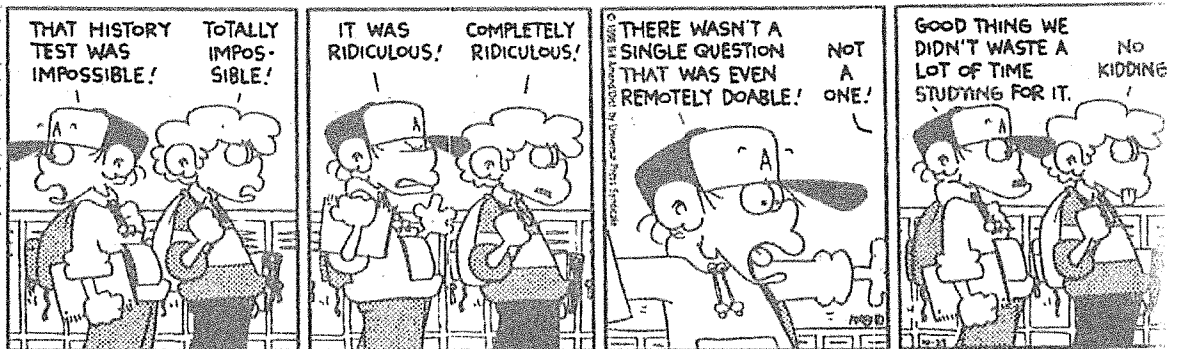
Summarize:

When you are asked to summarize or present a summarization, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustrations, and elaboration are to be omitted.

Trace:

When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or deduction.

FOX TROT



THE BUCKETS

