

This is from the NIU Testing Services Office...

Test Taking Tips

Objective and subjective (essay) tests are the two main types of tests. The questions on objective tests are true-false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or matching. For essay tests, students must be able to recall main ideas and details and organize them intelligently. These tests usually require short answers consisting of a sentence or two, a list, or longer discussion answers. **The CTSM Comprehensive Exam is objective – all true-false and multiple choice.**

When students receive their copy of the test they should:

- Read the instructions and be sure they understand them.
- Plan their work, and work their plan.
- Answer the easy questions first and then go back to the more difficult questions.
- Write legibly. **(No writing, but fill in the scantron answer sheet correct bubbles completely.)**

Before beginning an objective test, keep in mind:

- The answers are clearly right or wrong.
- **Look for the qualifiers in the sentence.** Qualifiers are such words as: all, most, some, no, never, least, always, equal, maximum, greatest, not, less, mainly, highest, lowest, most nearly, best, etc. These are the keys to a sentence. Sometimes, substituting one of these words in a sentence will help clarify it.
- Always keep in mind that the context of a question relates to that specific course.
The course number is listed in front of each question, and an insert is taped inside the front cover with the number/name of each session to help recall.
- Be slow to change an answer because your first impulses are usually correct.

The following was provided by NIU's Counseling and Student Development Center. Finals "High Performance" Checklist

Finals are a time of increased stress for nearly all students. While deadlines and the desire for good grades can be extremely motivating, excessive stress and anxiety can interfere with performance and result in a less than accurate picture of what was learned. A successful and stress free exam period can not be guaranteed. However, here are some ideas and tips that can help minimize anxiety and help students perform more effectively during exams. For more information, or assistance in implementing the below suggestions, stop by the NIU Counseling and Student Development Center or the Wellness Resource Center.

Food and Nutrition

- Increase your intake of fresh fruits and vegetables to build up your natural reserve.
- Make a list and prepare some healthy snacks you can keep for use during studying or breaks.
- Try to maintain regular meal times and eat healthy balanced meals. Your body will need all the help you can give it to serve you well during this time.

Sleep & Relaxation

- Maintain as normal a sleeping pattern as possible.
- Don't try and fall asleep until you've had a chance to calm down and relax.

Test Anxiety

Most individuals will experience some form of test anxiety when they take an important examination. This anxiety can present itself in physical symptoms like nausea or sweaty palms, or in emotional symptoms like panic and irritability. Often, individuals will become nervous long before the exam date because they feel overwhelmed by the amount of material they must master. The first step in defeating this anxiety is realizing that it is a perfectly natural reaction, and one that can be minimized. In order to regain control over anxiety, one should break the exam content into smaller sections. It will seem much easier to master a series of small subjects than to tackle a huge subject all at once.

Test-takers should make a study schedule weeks or months ahead of the exam, and give themselves a small amount to learn each period. When the examination day finally arrives, anxiety will be reduced by the feeling of preparedness. Of course, being fully prepared for an exam does not mean that one will not experience some jitters when it comes time to prove one's knowledge. This anxiety can be diminished in a few easy ways. First, try to avoid having any excessively stimulating foods, such as those containing caffeine or sugar, on the day of the exam. Getting a good night's sleep and a little bit of exercise will refresh one's brain and allow for easy recall of the learned material. During the exam, breathe deeply and sit in a comfortable position. On exams where this is possible, many people find comfort in going through and answering all of the obvious questions before tackling the more difficult ones.

The following is from a professor in NIU's Marketing Department. He shares this with all his students at the beginning of the term.

- **Study in small groups**
 - Make sure your study group contains only students who are serious about studying. At least some of them should be at your level of ability or better.
 - Go over as many different problems as you can (like old homework problems, unassigned problems in the course text, and problems on old exams). Set up the solutions, but don't crunch numbers. Don't leave a problem until you're convinced you could do it by yourself.
 - Brainstorm possible things you could be asked and answers you might give.

- Leave the beer in the refrigerator until you're done studying.
- **Make up a crib sheet** as though you were going to cheat on a closed-book exam. If the test is closed-book, know what's on the sheet. If it's open-book, bring the sheet with you.
- **Don't stay up all night studying.** Try to get a reasonable amount of sleep the night before the exam. If that's not possible, try to get a nap before the exam, or at least a short rest.
- **Set up a backup system for your alarm clock.** Set a second alarm, or arrange for a wake-up call from a friend.
- **Arrange for backup transportation to campus.**
- **Bring everything you need to the exam:**

For the CTSM exam nothing is needed. You will receive pencils, a calculator, and a clipboard.

Anything you bring to the exam room will be collected by the exam proctor, and you may pick them up after you have turned in your exam.

II. TAKING THE TEST

- **Read over each question at least twice before answering.**
- **Choose the problem or question that seems easiest to you and do it first.** Continue to do the problems in order of increasing difficulty.
- **STAY IN MOTION!!!** Work on a problem until you get stuck. Think about it for a minute or two, and if nothing comes to you then drop it and go on to another problem. *Don't spend too much time on any one question. You may write notes in the exam booklet, so put a question mark by questions you want to come back to. Jot down ideas as they come to you in the margins.*
- **Never leave a multiple choice question unanswered.** If you skipped a question earlier and have now come back to it at the end and you still can't get it and time is running out, guess. Put an answer down even if you are unsure whether it is correct or not.
- Don't panic. If you feel yourself sweating or hyperventilating, put down your pencil, close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and consciously relax any muscles that you're clenching (jaw, neck, stomach). When you're calmer, go back to work.
- If you have time at the end, check your solutions.
- Hand in your paper when time is called. Nothing makes an instructor/proctor more homicidal than having to wrestle you to the floor to get your paper.
- If you get done before the three hours allotted, go back and re-read your answers and check everything over.

Psychological Warfare

Examiners can choose the same letter successively for the correct answer. After three consecutive answers with the same letter, many students may well start to feel confused and worried. Eventually, many candidates will start changing their answers simply because they don't believe that examiners would have half a dozen or more questions with the same letter one after the other. **Our exam questions are computer generated, so it can happen that there may be several of the same answer options in a row.**

Studying in Small Groups

Right after the exam registration deadline (one month prior to exam date), the CTSM program administrator will contact you to see if you would like to participate in a study group with other examinees. For interested persons, she will connect you by e-mail.

Exam Q&A with CTSM Director Prior to Exam

In your one-month out message from the CTSM program administrator, she will also ask you if you would like to participate in a Q&A call with CTSM executive director Jan Nelson. Jan will host a GoToMeeting conference call about two weeks prior to the exam so that you can ask her your questions.