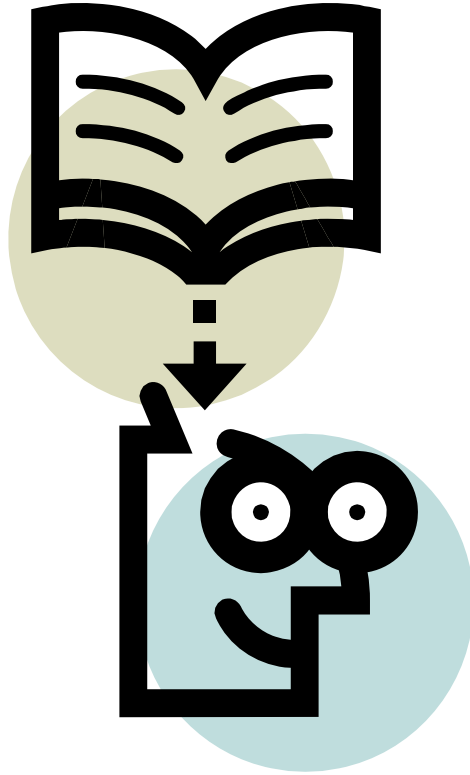


Test Taking Strategies Workshop



“Knowledge begins as a foundation, blocks need to be added until you reach the top!”

Student Advising & Learning Center
260 Lighty Student Services Building
509-335-6000

Material adapted from:

Piscitelli, Steve. (2004). Study Skills: Do I really need this stuff? Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

<http://www.studygs.net/>

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Agenda

1. Introduction

- a. What is your test affinity level: Do you love, like or dislike tests and why?
- b. Test Anxiety
- c. Anxiety v.s. inefficient test-taking strategies (Do you believe you need to begin preparing for tests on the first day of class? Do believe if you begin preparing early this will eliminate some of the anxiety you feel on test days? How many of you have a test taking strategy?)

2. Taking Tests – Helpful tips to add to your strategy

- a. List test taking strategies. Form a group and share what works for you and why. As a group pool your ideas and negotiate a list of the most useful strategies (4).
- b. Distribute Tips for Test Taking
- c. Various test formats

3. Study skills

- a. PUT THEM TO WORK
- b. Plan
- c. Test preparation checklist

4. Memory

- a. Short oral exam game, in inference (The Story of Billy and Tom)
What is required to recall information?
 - i. Concentration/Focus
 - ii. Listening
 - iii. Reflection
 - iv. Repetition
- b. Classic memory techniques
 - i. Observation
 - ii. Association
 - iii. Clustering
 - iv. Imaging
 - v. Mnemonics
 - vi. Acronyms
 - vii. Sentences
 - viii. Jingles or Rhymes
 - ix. Physical Techniques

4. **Closing:** The best strategy is one you have created yourself. What have you learned today that you can add to your strategy? Does anyone remember the quote? Does anyone remember my name? Does anyone remember where I work?

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Test-Taking Strategies Workshop
Thursday August 24, 2006
CUE 119

List your current strategists for successful test taking. “Be honest!”

Before the Test

During the Test

After the Test

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Before the Test

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

During the Test

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

After the Test

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

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Test Anxiety

Why might you anxious about exams?

Check any of the following thoughts that may cause, or have caused, you some anxious moments on test day.

- The instructor will be upset with a poor performance
- I'll be upset with a poor performance
- My parents will be upset with a poor performance
- I'll feel like a dummy if you don't do well
- A poor test grade will kill my GPA
- I mentally freeze
- My attitude is that tests are dumb anyway
- I know the material, but I freeze when I'm timed
- My mind drifts during the exam
- I tend to look at two or three test items at one time
- I suddenly realize I should have crammed the night before
- I speak to myself with a lot of negative self-talk (distortions)
- I have so much nervous energy I cannot focus
- I don't have confidence in myself always seem to score worse than I expect
- I fear what this exam will do to my future opportunities (e.g. jobs)
- Other people distract me with their movements
- I feel nauseous
- I feel tense from head to toe
- I do a lot of last-minute talking with friends about the exam
- Other reasons:

Now look at the items you checked. Do you notice any similarities among them? Closer inspection will reveal the following categories:

- (Y) how you view **yourself**
 - (O) how **others** perceive you
 - (U) **unrealistic** goals (is your "sky" too high?)
 - (T) **thought** distractions
 - (U) for all your talk, you were just **unprepared**
- Y.O.U.T.U. (YOU TOO) can conquer test anxiety**

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Test anxiety or inefficient test-taking strategies?

Some students are not anxious about exams. They are prepared and comfortable come test day. But they still perform at a sub par level. The problem, in this case, may be one of time – they usually run out of it. If this is your problem, try the following suggestions.

Before you begin writing your exam answers, review all items. Get a “feel” for the test. How long will you need to do page one? Page two? In other words, establish a pace for yourself. Then proceed as follows:

- *Keep track of time.* Wear a watch. This is your responsibility
- *Do the easy items first.* If you do run out of time, you don't want to miss the easy points. “Easy” refers to context as well as item type. Obviously, make sure you answer all the questions you *know*. You may wish to do the item types you are most comfortable with before you tackle the more challenging ones. If matching is easy for you, do it first.
- *Watch for trigger words.* Don't get an item wrong because you failed to see a trigger word. Underline, circle, and/or box key words. (Be sure you are allowed to write on the test paper.)

You can also prepare for content as well as the timed situation before your exam. Do as many practice tests as you can in a test like environment.

Putting your study skills to work

- *Goals.* Establish an attitude and know where you are going
- *Time management.* Establish your plan of how to get where you are going. Don't forget to tap into your learning style.
- *Classroom experience.* Actively listen, review, reorganize, and relate.
- *Reading strategies.* Actively read with a purpose. Relate to the big picture of the classroom experience.
- *Writing strategies.* Do you know enough about the topic to state an opinion and support it?
- *Memory.* Obviously, if you can't retrieve the information it will be extremely difficult to perform well on an exam.

Utilizing these strategies will lead to test-taking success.

Test preparation is not a one-time event. It is a process.

A positive mental attitude will carry you a long way. Sometimes it is a matter of semantics. Teachers sometimes say that students go to pieces at the mention of the word “test.” But tell the students they are having a “quiz,” an “exercise,” a “worksheet,” or an “opportunity,” and the anxiety is relieved immediately. If that works for you, then use it. The point here is to not be caught up in words. *Visualize* success – and then *achieve* it.

A certain amount of anxiety may even be useful. It can provide the motivation to keep you on your toes during the test. Likewise, confidence is fine – but arrogance can be devastating. Your assessment of your abilities and preparation must bear some resemblance to reality.

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Test Preparation Checklist

Class: _____ Instructor: _____ Test date & time: _____

Type of exam:

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Choice | <input type="checkbox"/> True/False | <input type="checkbox"/> Matching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completion | <input type="checkbox"/> Identification | <input type="checkbox"/> Essay |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lab work | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

What do I need when I study:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Textbook | <input type="checkbox"/> Notes | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher's study guide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worksheets | <input type="checkbox"/> Past exams | <input type="checkbox"/> Supplemental readings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calculator | <input type="checkbox"/> Pens, pencils, paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Will I study with a study group or alone? Alone Study group
(A word of caution about study groups: make sure they are more study than social! Set an agenda.)

Are there any study sessions the teacher will lead before or after class?

Yes No If "yes," when? _____

When will I study? Make a plan and stick to it!

Date/time: _____ Date/time: _____

Date/time: _____ Date/time: _____

(PUT THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR!!)

What do I need for test day?

- Pens, pencils, paper (lined, unlined, graph, bluebook)
- Calculator Ruler Wristwatch
- Notes – can I use my notes during the test?
- Textbook – is the test open-book

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Test Preparation Checklist, cont.

Class: _____ Instructor: _____ Test date & time: _____

Prioritization. What topics will the exam cover?

Topic	I really know this stuff	I am not too sure about this stuff	I have no clue about this stuff	Topic reviewed at least once
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

Predict some test questions, what are the answers? (This forces you to focus on the key concepts the teacher has been stressing.)

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Test Preparation Checklist, cont.

Class: _____ Instructor: _____ Test date & time: _____

Test preparation does *not* end when you hand in your test. Start preparing for your next exam by doing post exam analysis.

I was most prepared for: _____

I was not well prepared for: _____

Why? _____

The biggest help was:

- My notes My homework Tutoring sessions
- My study schedule My study group My study environment
- Other _____

My major weakness(es) was:

- Ran out of time during the test Did not expect this type of test
- Studied the wrong material Did not start studying early enough
- Other _____

Grade I *realistically* expect to receive _____ Grade I received _____

My *realistic* plan to improve for the next exam is:

Test-taking Strategies

General Organizing for Tests

- **Review:** EARLY! Give your brain time to get comfortable with the information
- **Daily Review:** Conduct short daily review sessions. You can ease into more intense review sessions prior to major exams.
- **READ!!:** Read your 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
- **Early Review:** Conduct a major review early enough to allow for a visit to the instructor during his office hours if necessary
- **Manageable chunks:** Break up the study tasks into manageable chunks, especially during major reviews 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 alert**

Before & During the Exam

- **Sleep:** Get a good night's sleep prior to the exam. Do not study right up until bedtime. Give your brain a rest and do something nonacademic before going to bed. Otherwise, you might wake up feeling like you have not had a break. You want to be as sharp as possible going into the test.
- **Eat well:** Depending on the time of the exam, eat a good breakfast or lunch, but don't overeat – this might leave you groggy. If you don't ordinarily eat breakfast or lunch, and that works for you, by all means don't eat. Use strategies that fit your lifestyle, body requirements, and personality.
- **Arrive early:** Bring all the materials you will need such as pencils and pens, a calculator, a dictionary, and a watch. This helps you focus on the task at hand
- **Comfort:** Be comfortable but alert. Choose a good spot and make sure you have enough room to work, maintain comfortable posture, but don't "slouch!"
- **RELAX!!!:** Stay relaxed and confident. Remind yourself that you are well-prepared and are going to do well. If you find yourself anxious, take several slow, deep breaths to relax. Don't talk about the test to other students just before it; anxiety is contagious.
- **Read:** Read all of the instructions carefully. Do *not* start until you know what you are expected to do. There really is no prize for finishing first.
- **Strategic Order:** Answer the questions in a strategic order
 - **First easy questions** to build confidence, score points, and mentally orient yourself to vocabulary, concepts, and your studies (it may help you make associations with more difficult questions)
 - **Then difficult questions** or those with the most point value. With objective tests, first eliminate those answers you know to be wrong, or are likely to be wrong, don't seem to fit, or where two options are so similar as to be both incorrect. With essay/subjective questions, broadly outline your answer and sequence the order of your points
- **Master:** Know your material! Don't just memorize it. More than likely, the wording on the exam will be different from what you found in your book, or what the teacher said in class. Relate to the *Big Picture*.

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Multiple-Choice Tests

- **Read:** READ CAREFULLY! Look for words such as *not, except, which is incorrect, best, all, always, never, none*.
- **Block:** Block all the answer choices before you look at them. Treat the item like a fill-in-the-blank question. Come up with an answer before you look at the choices. This might keep you from being swayed by a "trick" answer.
- **Elimination:** Use the process of elimination to arrive at the correct answer. At least you can narrow your options and make an educated guess.
- **Easy:** Answer the easy questions first; save the tough ones for the end
- **Underline:** Underline key words!
- **Check:** If you are using an answer sheet, make sure you transfer your answers to the correct number on the sheet.

True/False Tests

- **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
- **Attention:** Pay close attention to negatives, qualifiers, absolutes, and long strings of statements
 - **Negatives:** If the question contains negatives, as "no, not, cannot" drop the negative and read what remains. Decide whether that sentence is true or false.
If it is true, its opposite, or negative, is usually false
 - **Qualifiers:** Words like "sometimes, often, frequently, ordinarily, generally" open up the possibilities of making accurate statements. They make more modest claims, are more likely to reflect reality, and usually indicate "true" answers.
 - **Absolute:** "No, never, none, always, every, entirely, only" imply the statement must be true 100% of the time and usually indicate "false" answers
 - **Long Sentences:** Often include groups of words set off by punctuation. Pay attention to the "truth" of each of these phrases. If one is false, it usually indicates a "false" answer
 - **Guessing:** Often true/false tests contain more true answers than false answers. You have more than 50% chance of being right with "true". However, your teacher may be the opposite. Review past tests for patterns...

Matching Tests

- **Read:** Read all the answer choices first
- **Cross out:** Cross out the items you pick
- **Ask:** Find out if you are allowed to use an answer more than once
- **Easy:** Answer the easy items first!

Short Answer Tests

- **Prepare:** By studying off summary sheets that are packed with information within condensed space, try to categorize the material
- **Clues:** Use grammatical clues within a statement as hints for the correct answer
- **Common Sense:** 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
- **Simple:** Write your short answers in simple, telegraphic sentences packing as much information as you can is more important than literary style

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Essay Tests

- **Time Schedule:** 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.
 - 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).
- **Your own words:** Before attempting to answer a question, put it in your own words. Now compare your version with the original. Do they mean the same thing? If they don't, you've misread the question. You'll be surprised how often they don't agree.
- **Think:** Before you write. Make a brief outline for each question. Number the items in the order you will discuss them
- **Topic:** Know what the essay topic is.
- **Idea:** Develop a main idea.
- **Get right to the point:** State your main point in the first sentence. Use your first paragraph to provide an overview of your essay. Use the rest of your essay to discuss these points in more detail. Back up your points with specific information, examples, or quotations from your readings and notes
 - Teachers are influenced by compactness, completeness and clarity of an organized answer
 - Writing in the hope that the right answer will somehow 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.
- **First sentence:** Begin with a strong first sentence that states the main idea of your essay. Continue this first paragraph by presenting key points
- **Argument:** 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.
 - **Support:** Support your thesis with substantial facts; don't insult the teacher with "fluff"
 - **Grammar:** Pay attention to grammar and sentence structure
 - **No blanks!** Never leave an essay item blank. Put *something* down – you might get credit!

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- **Summarize:** in your last paragraph. Restate your central idea and indicate why it is important.
- **Review:** Complete questions left incomplete, but allow time to review all questions
- **Review, edit, correct:** misspellings, incomplete words and sentences, miswritten dates and numbers.

Not enough time?

Outline your answers

Key words: Know what your task is. Know these key words:

analyze: to divide a topic or issue into its parts; to show the relation of one part to another

apply: to use your knowledge in a new or different situation

assess: to judge the merits of some issue; to evaluate

classify: to put things into categories

compare: to provide similarities, differences, consequences

contrast: to provide differences

criticize: to judge critically

defend: to argue for a particular issue

define: concise, clear, authoritative meanings

describe: to explain an event, issue, topic; to explain the main characteristics

diagram: present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation of your answer

discuss: to explain in detail; to go beyond mere description

enumerate: specifies a list or outline form of reply. Recount one by one the points required

evaluate: to judge, criticize, establish standards

explain: clarify & interpret the material you present, i.e. how or why, reconcile differences in opinion or experimental results, and where possible state causes.

identify: to show how something is unique or individual

illustrate: to provide examples

interpret: to describe the meaning of an issue

justify: prove or show grounds for decisions, evidence presented in convincing form

list: similar to enumeration, be concise

motivations: what caused something to happen

outline: Organized description, give main points (omit minor details), present information in a systematic arrangement or classification

prove: demands confirmation or verification, establish certainty by evaluating and citing

relate: emphasize connection & associations in descriptive form

relative importance: how two or more factors compare with one another

review: specifies critical examination, analyze & comment briefly in organized sequence upon major points of problem

state: express high points in brief, clear narrative form; details & usually examples may be omitted

summarize: to restate briefly

trace: to provide an order or sequence of events

As you prepare for the exam, be kind to yourself. Don't sit there saying you are going to fail. Establish a goal and go for it. Successful students carry a positive attitude in their book bag 😊

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Open Book Tests

- **Understanding:** In an open book exam you are evaluated on understanding rather than recall and memorization
- **Expectations:** Apply material to new situations; analyze elements & relationships, synthesize, or structure; evaluate using your material as evidence
- **Access:** to content (books, notes, etc.) varies by instructor. The exam can be take home or in the classroom with questions seen or unseen before exam time

Do not underestimate the preparation needed for an open book exam: your time will be limited, so the key is proper organization in order to quickly find data, quotes, examples, and/or arguments you use in your answers.

Preparation:

- Keep current on readings and assignments in class
- Prepare brief, concise notes on ideas and concepts being tested
- Carefully select what you intend to bring with you to the exam, and note anything significant about what you do not
- Include your own commentary on the information that will provide fuel for your arguments, and demonstrate that you have thought this through
- Anticipate with model questions, but not model answers. Challenge yourself instead with how you would answer questions, and what options and resources you may need to consider.

Organize your reference materials, your "open book:" Make your reference materials as user-friendly as possible so that you don't lose time locating what you need

- **Familiarize:** yourself with the format, layout and structure of your text books and source materials
- **Organize:** these with your class notes for speedy retrieval, and index ideas and concepts with pointers and/or page numbers in the source material (Develop a system of tabs/sticky notes, color coding, concept maps, etc. to mark important summaries, headings, sections)
- **Summaries:** Write short, manageable summaries of content for each grouping
- **List:** out data and formulas separately for easy access

Test taking:

- **Read:** the questions carefully to understand what is expected.
- **Time:** Make good use of time. Quickly review the number of questions and note how much time each could take. First answer the questions that you are confident of and/or for which you will not need much time checking out the resources. Leave more complex and difficult questions for later
- **Don't over-answer:** Aim for concise, accurate, thoughtful answers that are based in evidence.
- **Quotations:** Use to - to illustrate a point, or act as a discussion point; to draw on the authority of the source; because you could not say it better
 - **Short:** Three or four words can be extremely effective when they are worked into the structure of your sentence
 - **Reference:** to a quote may be as effective as the quote itself
 - **Over-quoting:** It is your words and your argument; extensive quoting may detract from your point or argument

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Learning Styles

TOPIC	AUDITORY	KINESTHETIC	VISUAL
Preparing for the exam	Utilize the three R's (review, reorganize, relate)	Write questions on flash cards	Write potential exam questions
During the exam	Preview the entire exam; methodically work through items simplest to more difficult; if appropriate (and not distracting to others), say items out loud.	Preview the entire exam; physically block out all but the item you are working on.	Preview the entire exam; mark up the exam as much as is helpful

Memory

The following techniques use associations with letters, images, maps, etc. to help you remember. As you proceed through this list of techniques, try to think of strategies that would be useful to you! Some people use letters, some images, some songs. Each depends on how comfortable you are with, or how useful they are to your way of thinking.

- **Association** – Simply by inventing a 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.
- **Clustering** - Overhead
- **Imaging** - Imagine yourself walking through a 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.
- **Mnemonics** - 'Mnemonic' is another word for memory tool. Mnemonics are methods for remembering information that is otherwise quite difficult to recall by using sights, sounds and feelings
- **Acronyms** - An **acronym** is an invented combination of letters. Each letter is a cue to, or suggests, an item you need to remember. For example:
 - ROY G. BIV, the colors of the Rainbow - Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet
 - IPMAT, the stages of cell division: Interphase, Prophase, Metaphase, Anaphase, Telephase
- **Acrostic/Sentences**- using an invented sentence or poem with a first letter cue. The first letter of each word is a cue to an idea you need to remember. Example:
 - (PEMDAS) sequence in solving or evaluating math equations: Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally.
Parenthesis, Exponents, Multiplication, Division, Addition, Subtraction
- **Jingles or Rhymes** – Memorize key words that can be associated with numbers and then create an image of the items you need to remember with key words. Example, bun=one, shoe=two, tree=three, door=four, hive=five
- **Physical Techniques**

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An Uncritical Inference Test

Fact checking is an important skill. In my opinion, it is neither taught nor practiced often enough. However inference checking comes off even worse; probably because we infer things from what we read, see and hear almost unconsciously. This activity can help make students aware of the inferences they make, and why it is important to examine them. It can also be adapted for use with just about any written, visual or audio topic subject to True-False testing.

1. This activity can be conducted in either oral or written form. The oral form is probably best suited for students with limited reading abilities; but can be used with good readers too, especially if you're attempting to focus on listening and discussion skills. If you choose to use the written version with your students, make a copy of the Billy and Tom handout for each student before you begin.

2. The Oral Test

- a. Explain to your class that you are about to read a very short story. Once you've finished, you'll present a set of statements about the story to the class. You'll ask the students to decide, based solely on the information presented in the story, whether each statement is true, false or questionable. If you want, review the instructions from the written test.
- b. When everybody is fully focused, read the story.
- c. Ask students to take out a sheet of paper.
- d. Have them number the spaces (1-15) where they will write out their answers.
- e. One at a time, read each of the numbered statements, having students write out T(rue), F(alse) or ? (questionable) in response to each. Allow no talking during this process. You can explain that there will be ample opportunity to discuss their responses later.
- f. Once students have written out their responses to all 15 statements (or whatever number you choose to use), review the statements one by one. If you like, poll the class prior to discussing each statement to find out how many responded T, F and ? to it. You might even choose to attempt to reach a class consensus on it before discussing "the answer".

3. The Written Test

- a. Distribute a copy of the Billy and Tom handout to each student in the class.
- b. Review the instructions and answer any questions students have about them.
- c. With no talking allowed, give students whatever time they need to read the story and respond to the statements.
- d. Either collect the papers or poll the students to find out how many responded T, F and ? to each statement.

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- e. One by one, discuss the statements. Before discussing a statement, poll the class or tabulate the written results to find out how many responded T, F and ? to it. You might even choose to attempt to reach a class consensus on an answer before discussing "the answer".

4. Inferences for discussion that might be drawn from this activity

- a. Humans automatically "fill-in the blanks" whenever we hear a story, and don't usually try to separate what we know "for sure" from what we infer "for sure".
- b. Once a person makes an inference, s/he is reluctant to accept that it might not be true.
- c. Uncritically accepting an inference makes it easier to accept related inferences as true.
- d. Uncritically accepting an inference makes it likely a person will reject conflicting inferences.
- e. Arguments, even wars, can result from a failure to examine and verify inferences.
- f. Any given inference can prove to be true.
- g. Any given inference can prove to be false.
- h. Once you begin thinking about an observation, many possible inferences from it come to mind.
- i. Contradictory inferences can be drawn from the same observation.

5. Possible follow-up activities

- a. Assign each student a paragraph or two from your textbook. Ask them to identify the factual and inferential assertions in their assigned reading.
- b. Ask each student to bring in a clipped newspaper or news magazine article, or the printout of a news article from a news web site. Collect the articles and place them in a large box. Have each student reach in (without looking) and pull out one of the articles with which to work. Ask them to identify the article's factual and inferential assertions. One by one, have each student summarize his/her article for the group and present at least one inferential assertion for discussion.
- c. Read a short news article (or a section from your textbook) to the class. Ask your students to write out one or more inferences that could legitimately be drawn from the reading. One by one, have students present an inference they've written down. Allow the class to discuss each as they are presented.
- d. Record a radio or TV news story. Play it for your class. Ask your students to write out one or more inferences that could legitimately be drawn from it. One by one, have students present an inference they've written down. Allow the class to discuss each as they are presented.
- e. Select a human interest or news photograph. Show it to your class. Ask your students to write out one or more inferences that could legitimately be drawn from it. One by one, have students present an inference they've written down. Allow the class to discuss each as they are presented.

Material adapted from:

Piscitelli, Steve. (2004). Study Skills: Do I really need this stuff? Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

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- f. Next time you plan a True-False test or quiz, make it a T-F-? test or quiz instead. As an additional requirement, ask students to support each T-F-? answer in writing.
- g. Related Classroomtools.com activities
- [Is That A Fact?](#) gives you a tool to introduce your students to fact checking.
 - [Logic to the Rescue](#) shows your students how to identify the impossible.
 - [Propaganda in the Classroom](#) provides activities and resources that let your students begin exploring of the machinery of manipulation in which we are immersed 24/7.

More Uncritical Inference Tests

As far as I know, William V. Haney developed the first Uncritical Inference Test. Many variations of it have found their way to the web. Here are links to a few.

- [*The Institute of General Semantics*](#)
- [*The European Society for General Semantics*](#)
- [*Thisisnotthat.com*](#)
- [*An excerpt from Haney's story and test*](#)
- [*Dave's version*](#)
- [*A Google search that will show you links to any additional tests available on the web*](#)

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The Story of Billy and Tom

Instructions

Read the story below. After you've finished, read each numbered statement. On the line to its left, indicate whether you believe that statement is true (T), false (F) or questionable (?). A statement is to be considered true when there are statements in the story showing it to be true, false when there are statements in the story showing it to be false, and questionable when the story contains no direct evidence showing it to be unambiguously true or false.

The Story

Billy and Tom were lifelong friends. Everything they did was with the other in mind. They had even considered going into the ministry together, but had decided against it at the last minute.

Both were happy with the way things had worked out for them in the army. They had joined on the "buddy system" to insure that they could stay together, and that their friendship would continue. Currently, they were stationed at Camp Bingo, a minor supply base in a war zone, miles away from enemy action.

Things couldn't have been more perfect for the two of them.

One day while the two were on a routine patrol just outside the camp, an enemy soldier suddenly appeared in the bushes and opened fire. At least one of the bullets hit Billy.

Seeing Billy fall, Tom turned just in time to witness the sniper run off. Tom raised his rifle and took aim. He pulled the trigger, but there was no shot. His rifle had jammed. In an instant, he was in pursuit.

Moments later, he spotted the sniper who lay writhing in pain on the ground. The sniper had fallen after breaking a leg when he tripped on a prominent tree root overgrown with weeds. As Tom approached, the sniper began to yell, "I surrender! I surrender!"

Tom glanced over his shoulder in Billy's direction, then approached the sniper.

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The Statements

- ___ 1. Billy and Tom had been friends all of their lives.
 - ___ 2. Both had doubts about their religious beliefs.
 - ___ 3. The sniper spoke English well.
 - ___ 4. Tom and Billy graduated high school together.
 - ___ 5. When the sniper opened fire, Billy and Tom were side by side.
 - ___ 6. Tom walked with a limp.
 - ___ 7. In his anger over Billy's death, Tom wanted to kill the sniper with his bare hands.
 - ___ 8. Tom and Billy were unhappy in the Army.
 - ___ 9. Had the sniper not lost his rifle when he tripped, he would not have wanted to surrender.
 - ___ 10. Tom cleaned his rifle regularly.
 - ___ 11. Camp Bingo was not in the United States.
 - ___ 12. Camp Bingo was a dangerous place.
 - ___ 13. The sniper was working alone.
 - ___ 14. Another member of Billy and Tom's patrol stopped the sniper by shooting him as he was running off.
 - ___ 15. Tom approached the sniper as he lay writhing in pain on the ground.
-

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The Story of Billy and Tom - Responses

The Statements with Responses

T 1. Billy and Tom had been friends all of their lives.

The first sentence in the story makes this clear.

? 2. Both had doubts about their religious beliefs.

The story does not tell us why they decided against entering the ministry.

? 3. The sniper spoke English well.

Possibly, but it is also possible that "I surrender" was the only English phrase he knew.

? 4. Tom and Billy graduated high school together.

The story says nothing about their educational achievements or relative ages.

? 5. When the sniper opened fire, Billy and Tom were side by side.

The story says nothing about their relative positions as they patrolled.

? 6. Tom walked with a limp.

Unlikely given their presumed ages and military enlistment health requirements, but Tom might have had a small stone in his boot that day. It is also possible that he'd developed a blister while on patrol.

? 7. In his anger over Billy's death, Tom wanted to kill the sniper with his bare hands.

We are told nothing about the effect of the bullet on Billy, or about Tom's state of mind or intentions. A bullet might have hit Billy's helmet, knocking him out but not penetrating the metal. In a Hollywood film, Tom would most likely seek instant retribution for what he probably assumed had happened; but in real life, there are too many possibilities for us to know for certain what his actions might be.

F 8. Tom and Billy were unhappy in the Army.

The story is clear that they were happy in the army, and that things had worked out perfectly for them there.

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? 9. Had the sniper not lost his rifle when he tripped, he would not have wanted to surrender.

The story says nothing about what happened to the sniper's rifle. Perhaps he had it, but was in too much pain to lift and aim it.

? 10. Tom cleaned his rifle regularly.

We are not told what caused Tom's rifle to jam. It could have been dirty, but there might also have been a mechanical failure.

? 11. Camp Bingo was not in the United States.

We are not told when or where the war took place. If it was the American Civil War, this statement would be false. As it would be if the story refers to a future war on American territory.

? 12. Camp Bingo was a dangerous place.

It proved dangerous for Billy and the sniper on this one day, but we know nothing about its danger at other times except that it is several miles from enemy action.

? 13. The sniper was working alone.

The story tells of only the one sniper, but does not rule out others.

F 14. Another member of Billy and Tom's patrol stopped the sniper by shooting him as he was running off.

The story is clear that the sniper was felled when he tripped on the tree root.

T 15. Tom approached the sniper as he lay writhing in pain on the ground.

The story states this clearly.

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