

Study Skills in Action

Using a Test-Taking Strategy

What do runners do before a race? They design a strategy for running their best. They make sure they get enough rest, eat sensibly, and get to the track early to warm up. In the same way, it is important for students to get a good night's sleep, eat a healthy meal, and get to class early to allow time to focus before a test.

The biggest difference between a runner's race and a math test is that a math student does not have to reach the finish line first! In fact, many students would increase their scores if they used all the test time instead of worrying about being the last student left in the class. This is why it is important to have a strategy for taking the test.



These runners are focusing on their techniques, not on whether other runners are ahead of or behind them.

Smart Study Strategy

Use Ten Steps for Test Taking

- 1** ▶ **Do a memory data dump.** As soon as you get the test, turn it over and write down anything that you still have trouble remembering sometimes (formulas, calculations, rules).
- 2** ▶ **Preview the test.** Look over the test and mark the questions you know how to do easily. These are the problems you should do first.
- 3** ▶ **Do a second memory data dump.** As you previewed the test, you may have remembered other information. Write this information on the back of the test.
- 4** ▶ **Develop a test progress schedule.** Based on how many points each question is worth, decide on a progress schedule. You should always have more than half the test done before half the time has elapsed.
- 5** ▶ **Answer the easiest problems first.** Solve the problems you marked while previewing the test.
- 6** ▶ **Skip difficult problems.** Skip the problems that you suspect will give you trouble.
- 7** ▶ **Review the skipped problems.** After solving all the problems that you know how to do easily, go back and reread the problems you skipped.
- 8** ▶ **Try your best at the remaining problems that confuse you.** Even if you cannot completely solve a problem, you may be able to get partial credit for a few correct steps.
- 9** ▶ **Review the test.** Look for any careless errors you may have made.
- 10** ▶ **Use all the allowed test time.** The test is not a race against the other students.