

Exam-Taking Skills

- Relax before the exam. Don't study up to the last second before the exam. It tends to just make you more nervous.
- Be one with the exam. Don't spend any of your exam time thinking or worrying about other things; you will then have less time to do the exam. Focus on the exam. Don't even worry about how you are doing on the exam. Just focus, and do the best you can. Worrying will only decrease your efficiency.
- Focus on one problem at a time to increase your efficiency. Don't worry about the other problems. Don't read through the entire exam before starting to do the problems.
- Do the problems in the order that they are given. Instructors often will start with easy problems and end with the hardest problems. In this way, you will build confidence in yourself at the beginning of the exam. In addition, you will be more efficient with your time.
- If you get stuck on one problem, proceed to the next problem. If you have time at the end, you can come back to it. Often when you're focused on something but can't remember it, you will remember it after you stop focusing on it.
- If you don't understand what is being asked for or if you think there may be a mistake on the exam, ask your instructor. The instructor will usually help you, unless the instructor thinks he/she would be telling you how to do the problem.
- Budget your time. Do not spend too much time on any one problem. A 100 point exam, done in 50 minutes, requires you to do 2 points per minute. So a 10 point problem should be completed in approximately 5 minutes. A 20 point problem should be completed in approximately 10 minutes.
- On the other, don't rush through the exam so fast that you make a lot of errors.
- If you start getting anxious during the exam, close your eyes, take a deep breath, exhale slowly, and say to yourself several times "relax, relax, relax."

- At the end of each problem ask yourself if the answer makes sense. Propagate your units to make sure you have the correct units for your answer. If you know of any approximations to see if your answer is approximately correct, use them.

- If you have time at the end, check your work and your significant figures.