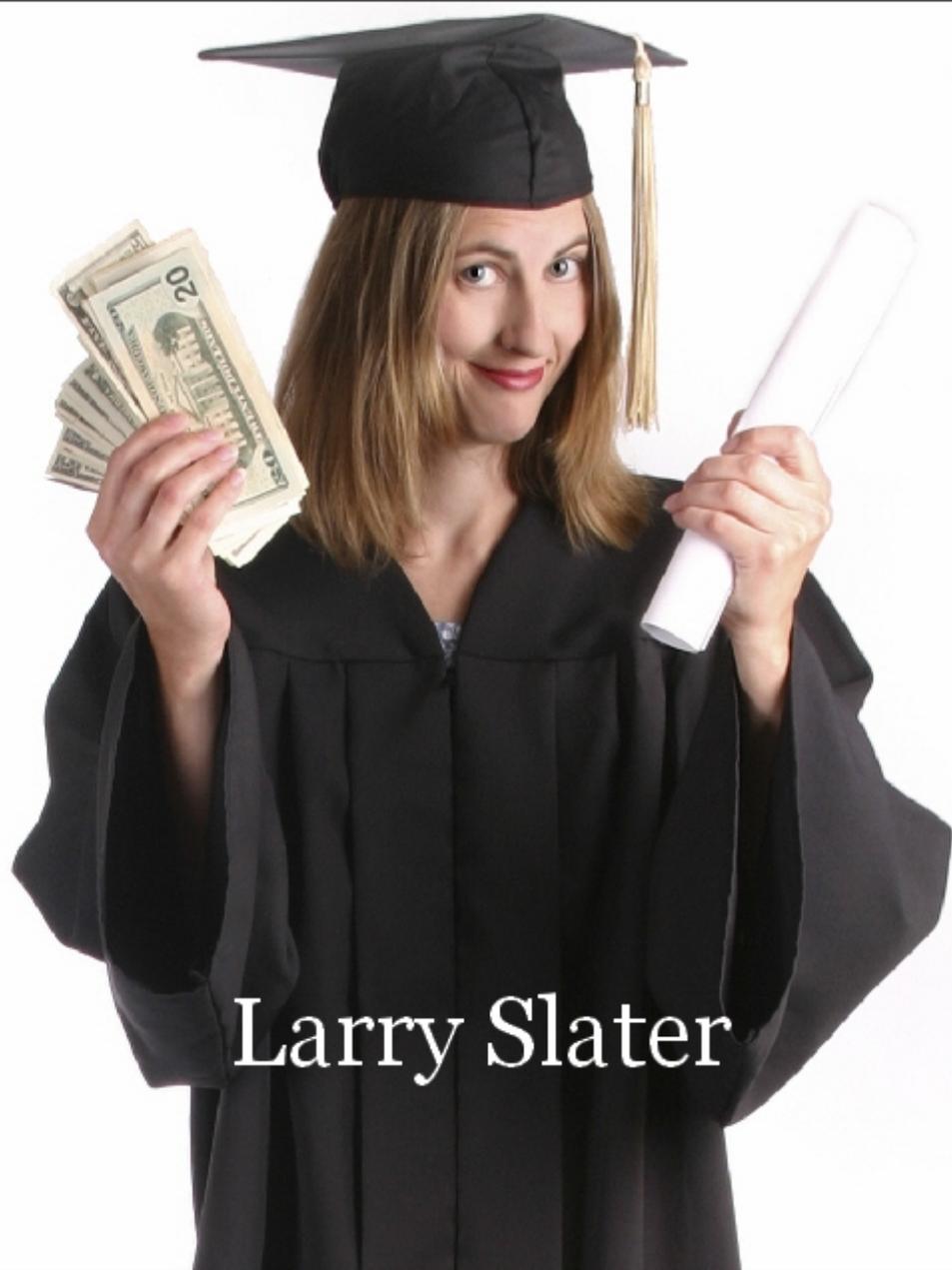


COLLEGE STUDY GUIDE



Larry Slater

COLLEGE COST CUTTING TIPS

College Study Guide

by Larry Slater



Slater Press

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Introduction

In college learning is focused on classes and the classroom but in order to succeed you must prepare before you get there. Think of the classroom as your stage and you need to rehearse before you go on or you WILL flop. Believe me. I know. In this section I have tried to boil down what you need for your classes to the essential ways I've learned the hard way to become a star in the classroom.

It's The Credits Stupid

Problem: Sign up for classes, get your credits and graduate. You've done this before, haven't you?

Answer: Learn all about credits.

Savings: Time, and time is money.

When you first get to college you are, face it, ignorant. You don't know hardly anything about anything pertaining to college; especially how to get out. I'm talking particularly about those little things that rule your life and for which you give up time and money to acquire. What am I talking about? Why those lovely little critters called credits. Briefly put, a credit it is the number of hours you are in class for a particular subject. For example, say you have a 3-credit Math class. That means you will be in class three hours a week. But it is also assumed that you will study 3 hours for every 1 hour you attend class. That is why the normal load for a semester is 12 to 15 hours a week of classes, which translates into 36 to 45 hours of study a week. But everyone is different. Some require more hours of study and some less. Often it depends on the subject that you take. What all this means is that in order to graduate with an Associates degree you will usually have to accumulate 60 hours of classes or 60 credits. For a Bachelor's degree you will need 120 credits.

Syllabus Boss

Make sure you attend the first class of the semester because that is when you receive your syllabus. The syllabus tells you what will be expected of you in the class. It will contain the list of books you will be required to read, the times and places the classes will meet, what assignments there will be and when these assignments will be turned in, the guidelines on how the assignments and tests will be graded, etc. It is definitely the most important class you need to attend otherwise you will be lost for the rest of the term. From then on you are on your own.

Counselors

Before visiting your counselor you should already know what you would need to complete your degree. When you see them ask for as much advice as you can since they are the people who must okay your class selections. Remember it's your life so take charge. If you have some options in mind you can run them past them and see what other options they can come up with. Together you may be able to achieve some usual solutions to your getting your degree. But don't blindly depend on their judgment.

April was told by her counselor that she needed to take a Math class to satisfy a Math requirement for her degree in order to graduate. After she had successfully completed it she was told she didn't need it after all. The counselor's mistake didn't cost her anything but it cost April quit a bit of money and she lost the time she invested in the class. This is just a reminder that no matter how competent your counselor it's ultimately up to you.

And just because those catalogs have it all written down doesn't mean they can't be changed on an individual basis. If you want to take a class that has certain prerequisites that you don't have it doesn't mean you can't come up with some way to take it. Go talk to the professor to get their opinion. Sometimes they are so desperate to get enough students in the class that they are willing to bend a little. Maybe they are willing to work with you so that you're up to speed when the class begins. or there may be an alternative class that's going to be offered later that is more to your liking.

Just because it's not written down doesn't mean it doesn't exist either. That's why you have to ask. But if you don't ask you'll never know.

I learned early that nothing is ever written in stone. Several times I wanted to take a class that had a certain prerequisite which I didn't have but after talking to the teacher we devised a way for me to get up to speed so I could take the class even without having taken the prerequisite. It never hurts to ask.

Class Alternatives

Problem: You must go to the same classes everyone else does. You're being programmed to do this. If you can't do it this way and succeed then your a failure and should just give up.

Answer: Do it your way.

Savings: \$1000s and years

Don't just follow the crowd. Be creative about finding ways to get your degree. Whatever you do, don't let a seeming roadblock defeat you. Always look for options

Summer Classes

Many students simply see Summer as an opportunity for fun-in-the-sun or to get a temporary job. For those who really want to make the most of Summer check out the Summer class options. These classes are condensed so you are forced to concentrate. That may be just what is needed for those who tend to "drift" during a long semester. And you can get quite a few credits in a relatively short period of time.

Internships/Practicum

Basically these are on-the-job experiences with some added academic work. You may have skipped over them in the class catalog because you didn't know what they were. Talk to your advisor to see what's available for you. Maybe something can be arranged. Just maybe you might be able to negotiate college credit for that summer job thus killing two birds with one stone.

While studying the Summer course schedule I saw listed several internships and practicums by the History and Political Science departments. Not knowing what they were I asked the department heads about them. After some negotiation, hard work, and a very full Summer I was able to satisfy 9 credits in Political Science by working

part-time for the U. S. Census Bureau and 3 credits in History working at a local historical site. In addition to the work I had to do some collateral reading, keep a diary and write a paper about each experience. The best part was that I got paid for doing it. To top things off I took a couple of Economic classes to increase my Summer total to 17 credit hours and this was while earning several hundred dollars.

CLEP Tests

College-Level Examination Program (<http://tinyurl.com/kfcc>) tests are administered by the College Level Examination Board and are a series of examinations, each 90 minutes long that allow you to demonstrate your knowledge in a wide range of subjects. You can choose from five General Examinations and 29 Subject Examinations. Approximately 2,900 colleges and universities across the country grant credit for CLEP exams and about 1,400 of those colleges also administer CLEP exams.

Find out if your school is one. For each exam you may earn from 3 to 12 college credits toward your college degree. That means you could earn up to two semesters (60 credit hours) worth of credit just by taking CLEP tests. But maybe your interested in receiving a course exemption and/or advanced placement in your degree program? By taking CLEP tests you can do so even before you get on campus. But by all means check with your adviser to be sure what tests apply. Then get the registration/admission form and instructions you need to begin.

Simon, who is Hispanic, took the Spanish language tests in order to satisfy his foreign language requirement. He only missed one question and earned 17 credits towards his degree. When I talked to him last he said he was thinking of taking the French tests as well.

Extra Time

If you're having trouble with a class and you're just not getting it, there are options. Maybe all you need is a little more time? Learning isn't instantaneous and sometimes it takes you more than the usually allotted time to put it all together. You may just have to take an incomplete for the class and finish it after the semester is over. When you finish with your other classes go back and really concentrate on finishing it. But be sure to finish it. Don't let it just hang there. It's just too easy to procrastinate about finishing it which will only exacerbate your problems and may be the cause of you not graduating at all.

"W"

Another last-ditch option is just to cut your loses and drop the course. A "W" (for withdrawal) will appear on your record. I've even withdrawn from a course on the last day of class; with special permission of course. It saved me from lousing up my transcript.

I remember an old Western where an ex-hired-gun had a saying when someone said they had no choice. He would say: "There are always choices." That's one of the truest statements I've ever heard.

Moral: *Before you take action find out what are your choices.*

Be An Adult

But no one is going to baby-sit you in college. It is all up to you to perform well enough to stay there. It is a privilege to go and one that you must continue to earn. There are only so many that are admitted and more that are turned away so now is the time to grow up and show everyone what you've got. That means being prepared for each class you attend.

Make It Count

Problem: Classes are boring. Just get through them and get on with the studying later when you would rather be doing anything else. You've been in them your whole life so just deal with it. Just get your credits, graduate and get on with life.

Answer: Make it worth it.

Savings: F's into A's

No one ever tells you what you should do in class once you show up. They just assume you know. But you know what they say about people who assume: you make an 'ass' out of you (u) and 'me'. It is up to you to read the assignments and prepare for each class so read these helps and don't assume anything.

Read It Before Class

Actually it's a better idea to read your assignment through twice before you get to the class. This is especially important if you're having trouble with the subject. Having read the material before class allows you to use the class-time as review. You also have a chance to ask the teacher right then about any questions you may have. Trying to arrange a convenient time to meet with them outside of class is difficult and never as beneficial as when you have the question fresh in your mind.

Set Near The Front

This may sound silly at first but there is sound reasoning behind it. For one thing, it's much easier to get involved in the class if you're close to the teacher. Another advantage is you are much more likely to ask questions. You're also better able to see what's presented on the screens at the front.

In one Psychology class there were a number of us “adult” students sitting in the front rows. By their being in the front rows, we showed

our shared interest in doing well in the class. The Professor was about our age so it prompted a little camaraderie amongst us all which really lessened the tension and improved our desire to share our common troubles. After our final test, we found out that we all did much better than we thought we would.

Review During And After

Continually review the material while it's being presented in class. It's a difficult skill to master but the rewards are more than worth it. Replaying the entire class in your mind as soon as possible after class, concentrating on important questions and answers is just as important. You can do this as you walk to your next class or to your car.

Tape It

Another idea is to tape-record the class. If you have a long commute you can listen to the class again on the way home. This is also a good way to cover your bases while concentrating and reviewing but don't let this be a substitute for in-class reviewing.

Read It Right

Problem: Required reading is boring and takes too much time. So what! If you just don't get it. Tough! That's the way it is, kid.

Answer: Take a hike.

Savings: F's into A's.

Reading a book is a lot like taking a road-trip. To get to your destination you first need to know where you're at and where you're going. Books have several tools to help you find out where the author is 'going' in the book and using them will give you a check on where your at.

Preface/Introduction

Read the Introduction first. Know why the author wrote the book in the first place. Yea it's more than just a vanity place for the author to tell you how great they are. Sometimes they condense the entire book in the Introduction telling you why they wrote it, who they wrote it for and the main points of the book. Sounds like the elements for a paper doesn't it?

Table of Contents

Get a quick overview of the book by looking at the Table of Contents. It will give you the main topics addressed by the author and often you can get the jest of a book simply by looking here. Then you can determine which chapters you don't have to read and which ones you need to read greatly shortening the time you need to learn.

Index

Next look at the Index. It is more than just a list of words. It will tell you the key words the author uses and that is especially useful if you are researching a topic and want to know how much the author addresses your topic.

Read It

Now do a quick read-through of the book. Think of it as a guided tour of the author's main thoughts. Don't dwell on every word but just try to pick out the main ideas. Do this reading even before classes start. You'll want to save your time later to spend with friends.

Remember the first guided tour you took of your campus. It was just a rush-through. You might not have remembered much but it was a big help in knowing where things were.

Read It Again

Finally read the book through again. Look for important things you missed the first time through. This will make the book as familiar to you as your school's campus is to you after a month of living there.

Summarize

1. Scan the Table of Contents
2. Scan the Index
3. Read the Introduction
4. Do a quick read-through
5. Read it again

If you follow these simple steps you will certainly gain more from your reading than you ever did before and you won't have to spend nearly as much time cramming for those tests.

Speak Up

Problem: Speaking in public is too hard. Hey, so you can't speak in front of an audience. Just mumble your way through and let others shine.

Answer: Speak up for yourself.

Savings: Self-respect.

Speaking correctly is essential for success in school and out. If you can't organize your thoughts and present them clearly and distinctly no one will bother to listen to you. So much of our information is transmitted via speaking that it helps tremendously if you learn how to speak and listen correctly as soon as you can.

Public Speaking

Sooner or later you'll have to give a speech. Many people are just terrified about giving speeches. This is a problem experienced by students and professionals alike. That's why there are some people who make a living just giving speeches. For starters you could get some good books on how to speak in public but it's really a matter of confidence that can be gained only with practice. It comes down to just doing it.

I've noticed that most of us, me included, tend to speak much faster than we need to. Just slowing down a little can give you more time to think about what you're going to say. This not only keeps you from tripping over your tongue but it also allows the listener to think about what you just said. That way you will communicate clearly and reduce the times you have to repeat yourself.

Oh, and one more thing, to make your conversations more interesting, read and remember a few good jokes. It will make you more memorable to your contacts and give them a better opinion of you. (Hey, it worked for Abraham Lincoln.)

Mark Twain

What do Twain, that's Mark not Shania, and a speech have in common? Both are worth listening to. Mark Twain was not only a great American writer, he was also a great public speaker. In fact, early in his career he was better known for his speeches than his writing. Even though these next few tips are for giving a speech, they can just as effectively be used in your writing.

Practice—When you give a speech, rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. Think of it as a performance before an audience. Know your speech inside and out. It will not only allow you to be confident but also allows you the ability to ad-lib if the situation calls for it.

Notes—Twain had a very interesting method he used to prompt him on the points of his speech. He would use pictures or little doodles on a pad on the podium that would represent the point or story he wanted to tell. When he got stuck he would just glance at the pad and one of the pictures would jog his memory.

Express Yourself—Be a showman. Don't show off but make sure what you do say is interesting. Twain used three methods to present a more dramatic speech.

He would use pauses effectively especially right before he would deliver the punch line or just before giving a surprise ending.

He would speak slowly giving everyone a chance to understand what he had just said.

And finally he created his own style that would engage the audience until the very end.

Tell Them a Story—If anything, Twain was a story-teller. We are still enraptured by the stories he told over a century and a half later. Stories hold people's attention better than just telling them the facts.

Start It Off Right—Get our audience's attention right away and don't lose it. Here are a few of the methods Twain used.

Twain's favorite was the self-introduction. Start by simply introducing yourself, which is a great way to lessen the tension and say something about what you actually know; your name.

Twain could get away with walking on stage and not saying anything for a minute. Think of it. Sixty seconds of nothing. If that doesn't make your audience yearn for you to say something I don't know what will.

Another technique Twain would use was walking on-stage with a book, acting like he was going to read from it and then close it. It looked as if he had decided not to continue with his predetermined speech and was going to ad-lib something more important. But it was all an act since he

would then continue to give the speech he had planned to give all along.

Create a Presence—Think of Mark Twain. What do you see? Probably someone dressed in white with a cigar and long flowing white hair. Twain walked differently, dressed differently and spoke differently. He was unique and he's still remembered today.

Write It Right

Problem: Writing is easy. Only dorks don't know how to write well. Just throw something down on the paper and pray the professor is sleeping when he read yours.

Answer: Say it right.

Savings: A Mental Breakdown or Flunking Out.

Writing well will go a long way in making your college life, and the rest of your life, successful. It's the most important means of presenting yourself as a knowledgeable and educated person.

Writing is difficult for most us and for me in particular. I worked hard at it and eventually I developed my own style of writing that gets me by but it still takes a lot of effort to get anything to sound right. That brings up a good point. Be sure to read what you write either to yourself or to someone else. If it doesn't sound right, edit it again. Sometimes you have to set it aside for a while and then pick it up in order to get a fresh perspective.

Writing The Paper

I wish I could say that writing a paper is easy; it isn't. But there are several steps you can take when you plan to write a paper that will greatly speed up this unpleasant task.

1. Decide what do you want to write about.
2. Find out what's out there on your subject.
3. Take good notes on the sources so you can document everything.
4. You should know enough now to create a thesis statement or topic sentence for your paper.
5. Get deeper into your sources to find the really good stuff.
6. Write out an outline of your paper.
7. Start filling in the information under the subtopics.
8. Write it out so that it "sounds" natural.

9. Go back and edit again so that it is the best you can do.

Summation

1. Tell them what you're going to tell them.
2. Tell them.
3. Then tell them what you told them.

Dr. Frankenstein I Presume

In order to build a good research paper you can think of it as building a person.

The Head—What is the research paper about? The Introduction is where you tell them what you want them to think.

The Body—This is where you support your head. Fill it up with muscle by supplying facts and relevant supporting material.

The Feet—Kick them out the door with the Conclusion. You've made your point now let's get on with it.

Okay, maybe you need a bit more information in order to construct a good monster, err paper, so here goes.

Introduction—The introduction, or as some like to call it, the Thesis is the idea you are trying to prove or communicate. If the paper is merely a survey of a particular subject then the Introduction may contain a topic sentence or a statement of the main idea of the paper. It could also give an outline of the paper so readers will know what you're going to tell them.

The Body—This is where the facts go. Organize your research into subtopics or logical groupings of your information. This is why creating an outline of your main points in your paper is so beneficial. Connect these topics in some logical way either chronological or developmentally. Once these main points are listed then all you have to do is fill in the information under each subtopic, tie it together with some appropriate connections and your body is done.

The Conclusion—Finish up by showing how significant your proof has been. If someone asked "So what?" after reading the body of your paper, the conclusion should provide the answer.

Footnotes, Endnote and Other Notes—Where's the proof? You have to verify where you got your information and this is where you put the sources. Make it easy for your readers by following the accepted rules.

Dictionaries

How many times have I seen a good paper lose a precious point for misspelled words? Lots! And they were all mine until spell check came out. Knowledge begins with a single word and your papers do too. Find out what the words mean and what other words you might use to express the same thought and keep your audience's attention. If you learn to use words you can rule the world; at least your little corner of it.

Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/>) - Everything you want to know about words. This site not only has great resources including games and a Word of the Day e-mail service but it also has a dictionary look-up button that you can add to your Internet browser's Links bar.

YourDictionary.com (<http://YourDictionary.com/>) - Multi-lingual dictionaries make this a great resource. This site also offers an Internet browser look-up button so now you have a choice. There are also instructions for adding YourDictionary.com to your computer's desktop using Active Desktop technology. And be sure you don't miss the Game Room.

Grammar And Style Guides

When it comes to writing papers you have to follow the rules and these rules are written down at these locations.

The Elements of Style (<http://www.bartleby.com/141/>) - Asserting that one must first know the rules in order to break them; this classic reference book is a must-have for any student and conscientious writer.

Web Style Guide (<http://webstyleguide.com/>) - The on-line version of Patrick Lynch and Sarah Horton's guide gives excellent advice on how to write for the Web. This can be especially helpful for your blogs and other on-line publications.

References That Work

Go to the authorities for your information and these are great places to start.

Awesome Library (<http://www.awesomelibrary.org/>) - Awesome Library organizes the Web with 22,000 carefully reviewed resources, including the top 5 percent in education. Enter their "door" for College Students and select the area you want to start your search in. Each of these areas is further divided into topics until you reach individual lesson plans, materials or papers.

Britannica.com (<http://www.britannica.com/>) - You can find just about anything here. I especially like the Browse features where you can look for maps, time lines, and the year in review or just look up general subjects.

Internet Public Library (<http://www.ipl.org/>) - This is a huge general library for public Internet use. There are several special collections such as Native American authors or Presidents of the United States. These are arranged into Reference, Reading Rooms, Searching Tools, Youth Resources, Subject Collections and Special Collections.

Library of Congress Online Catalog (<http://catalog.loc.gov/>) - This is the granddaddy of them all. The Library of Congress offers a wide variety of on-line databases and Internet resources to the public via the Web including its own on-line catalog. In addition the LC provides an easy-to-use gateway for searching other institutions on-line catalogs.

Cramming

Problem: Of course you have to study, study, and study to get good grades. There is just no other way. If you get behind for any reason then you're sunk.

Answer: Cram it!

Savings: Hours or Years

Cramming is a fact of life. It isn't just in college that people have to learn to burn the midnight oil in order to get something done at the last minute. So you won't get the most from your classes. All you want is to do good enough to get by; this time. If that's the case then there are helps.

Cliff Notes

Now if you just didn't have time to read that classic piece of literature before you big test then go get yourself a Cliff Notes book about it. What are *Cliff Notes* (<http://tinyurl.com/58epcm>)? They are summaries of the book in condensed form; sort of like reading the Reader's Digest version only not that long. Other subjects are also addresses in Cliff Notes volumes.

Cram Courses

You may be able to use Cliff Notes for more than a last minute test. You could use them to familiarize yourself with an entire subject in order to get up to speed if you started classes late. Or better yet, combine this with CLEP Tests and you are in business for knocking off entire courses by cramming. Sure its a shortcut but it can save you time to focus on more important things. What they are is up to you.

Test Yourself

Problem: Tests are the true measure of your abilities. Everything you do will be graded and you must perform in order to graduate. If you don't you flunk out. It's just that simple.

Answer: Beat the system.

Savings: Your career.

Tests are tests. What can I say? They are the scourges of school life but they can be tamed. Taking a test is simply a matter of making the odds come out in your favor. Of course you have to prepare and some of the methods I mentioned previously will help you do that. What I'm talking about here are those intangibles that you can't prepare for, things that will crop up on tests that you never saw coming. So before you take a test consider these factors.

Have A Positive Attitude

This can't be overemphasized. Having the confidence that you're prepared and that you'll do well goes a long way to actually getting a good grade. Of course this is predicated on you're being prepared.

Be Early

If you get to the test early try to go through the notes you think are important. More importantly listen to others as they do their last minute quizzing. I've picked up quite a few answers this way to questions I missed in my own preparations. Also, sometimes very important instructions will be presented on the front board and being early allows you time to read them.

Read The Instructions First

Be sure to read all of the instructions on the test before answering any of the questions.

I once had a teacher that prepared a test where the last question said that you only had to answer the first question. Having read all the questions first I saved a lot of time and had a good laugh on the others as they dutifully worked through all the questions from beginning to end. Sometimes, as you read the questions given later in the test, you'll find information that will help you answer one of the earlier questions.

Answer The Questions You Know

Go through all the questions and answer all the easy ones first and then go back to the hard ones. There are no prizes for going in consecutive order. Why hurt yourself by being conventional? Nervous tension that can block recall will be lessened as you begin to answer those easy questions giving you the confidence to tackle the harder ones later.

Essay Test

Essay tests are a special breed. For them I've found that volume and neatness are important. Why neatness? If you were the professor and had to read all those essays you would be appreciative of an easy-to-read essay too. Organize your material for effectiveness and then give examples of your points. Some other things to remember in writing essay answers are:

1. Cover all the main points.
 - a. The first sentence states your view.
 - b. The middle gives your reasons.
 - c. The last sentence gives your summation.
2. Begin by selecting the question you can answer best.
3. Write with authority.
4. Develop several points-of-view to the question if possible.
5. Sound familiar?

Formulas

Do any of your tests involve using formulas? If they do then write down the formulas as soon as you get your test and then refer to them later as you answer the questions.

Partial Credit

Be sure to show all the steps of your work when you do a problem, even if you can't get all of the answer. If you give the professor proof you

knew something about the answer you may get partial credit. Something is always better than nothing.

Changing Answers

Your first answer to a question is usually the correct one unless you're really sure that your initial answer was wrong. Again play the percentages.

True/False

When you get true and false questions watch out for words like "not", "never", "all", or "always". They can make the difference in what your answer should be.

Finally

My final point is that tests are really mathematical: a point here, a point there, it all adds up. Sometimes the difference between an A and a B, or between failure and passing, may only be one point.

One teacher wrote on the board before every test:

*"This test is not the sum worth
of your value as a human being."*

The same goes for one class. It is, after all, only a class. As an absolute last resort you can simply accept failure. Failure may be your best way to learn what you can't do. But then you can always go back and take the class again and this time is better prepared.