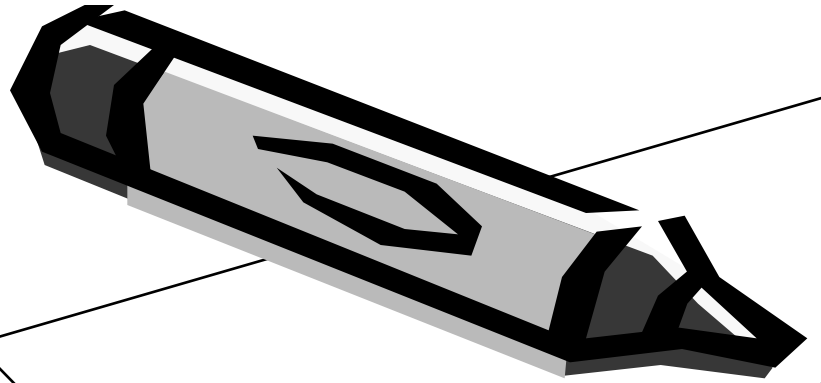


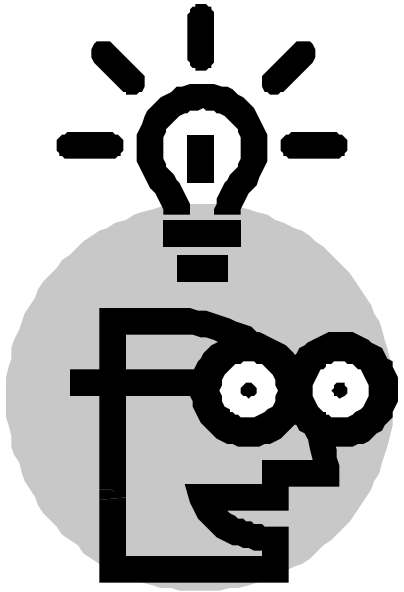
WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

Barbara B. Shadden

Marilyn G. McGehee

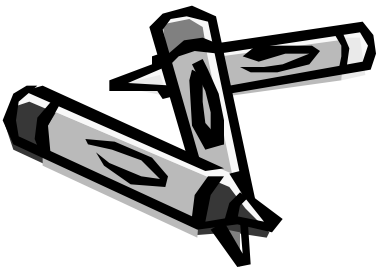
FACT #1

To be a good test taker you need to understand the different levels of learning that are being tested.



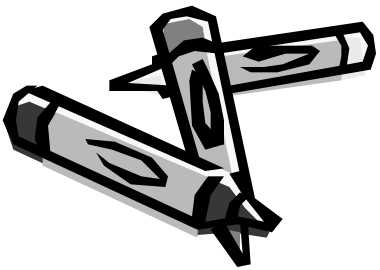
Bloom's Taxonomy

- AFFECTIVE--attitudes, interests, appreciation, modes of adjustment
- PERFORMANCE-- perceptual and motor skills
- **COGNITIVE--knowledge acquisition, outcomes, application (6 levels)**



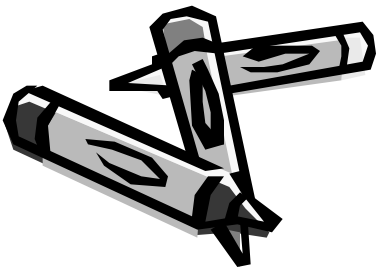
Six Levels of Cognitive Abilities

- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation



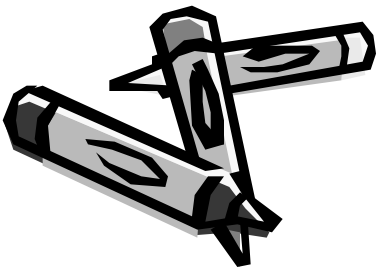
Why should I care? Because…

- ✓ your instructors may use this approach
- ✓ your instructors are definitely interested in building your level of learning
- ✓ new ASHA standards rely on Bloom's approach to learning (somewhat)
- ✓ your test taking improve if you understand what exactly is being tested



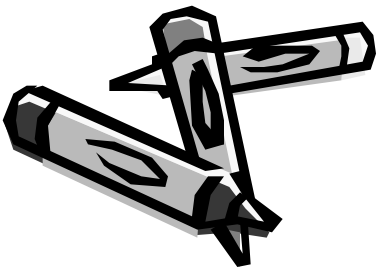
Level #1 -- KNOWLEDGE

- Basic facts, definitions, terms, and concepts
- Focus on information
- Often rote learning
- Common verbs: list, name, label, match, describe, define, select, reproduce, etc.

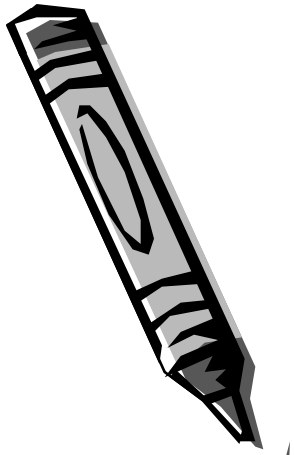


Knowledge Examples

- Define aphasia as presented in your textbook.
- Name the 5 most common types of communication disorders in kids
- Describe the myoelastic-aerodynamic theory of phonation
- TESTS: all objective formats



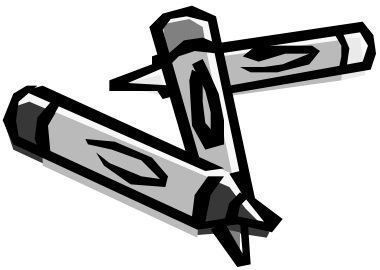
Level #2 -- COMPREHENSION



- Lowest (entry) level of understanding
- Translation of information from one form to another
- Interpretation of material by explaining or summarizing
- Prediction from known data
- Common verbs: explain, estimate, restate in your own terms, summarize, translate

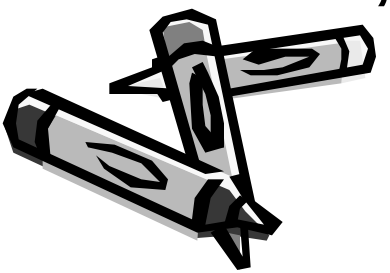
Comprehension Examples

- Explain the most common cause of distorted “r” in pre-school child
- Describe the hearing loss shown in this audiogram
- Summarize the main findings of a research article
- TESTS: all objective, some basic essays



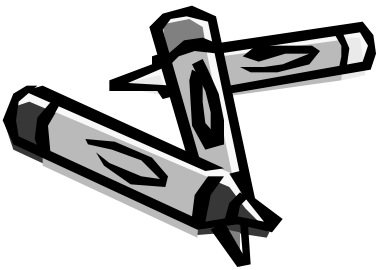
Level #3 -- Application

- Previously learned material can now be used in new contexts
- Application typically to very concrete situations
- Problem solving at most basic level
- Common verbs: solve, compute, apply, use, relate, determine



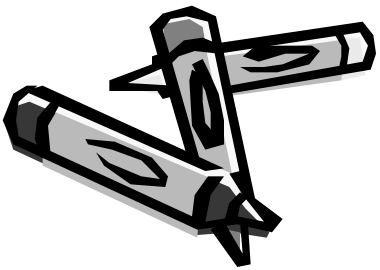
Application Examples

- Analyze which would be primary, secondary, and tertiary aging factors in a particular case
- Apply knowledge of discourse to select best assessment tasks for a specific client
- TEST: MC, essay, case study, open book, take-home



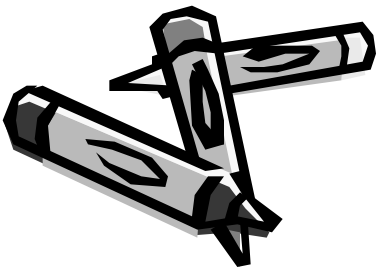
Level #4 -- Analysis

- Break down of material into component elements
- Identification of relationships among such elements
- Common verbs: compare, contrast, analyze, identify, separate, discriminate



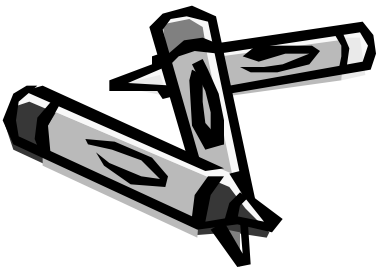
Analysis Examples

- Compare and contrast two major theories of stuttering
- Determine which of the following behaviors is indicative of RBD
- TEST: (MC), essay, take-home, open book, cases, journal, portfolio



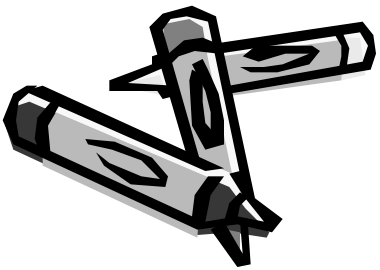
Level #5 -- Synthesis

- Analyzed information put together to create new wholes, unique plans or patterns, new perceptions of abstract relationships.
- Development of original organization of ideas, based on material learned/analyzed
- Common verbs: compose, design, rearrange, plan, derive, construct, develop



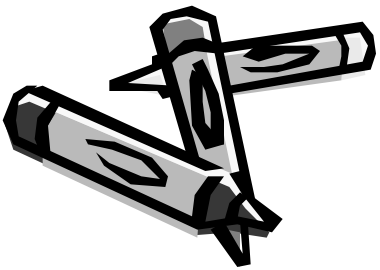
Synthesis Examples

- Create your own theory of stuttering based on research data and an understanding of other theories
- Develop an assessment instrument to determine parental reading practices with preschool children
- TEST: Same as Analysis



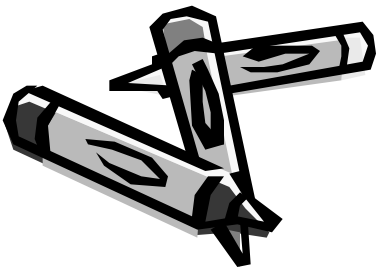
Level #6 -- Evaluation

- Making judgments about the value of information, ideas, materials
- Requires use of all previous levels of cognitive application.
- Common verbs: evaluate, judge, decide, select the most appropriate, defend, support (an argument



Evaluation Examples

- Evaluate the following diagnostic test results and determine the probable cause of a child's S-L problems
- Support one of the following theories about normal cognitive aging
- TEST: All except objective (MC possible, but uncommon)

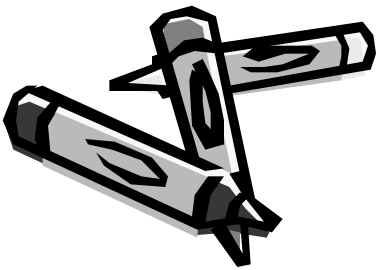


FACT 2

- You need to know the “tricks” of different types of tests.
- Different test taking strategies are required for each test type.

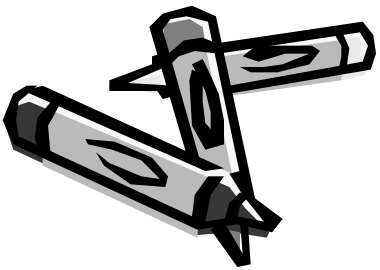
Multiple Choice

- Should have
  - Stem
  - Distractors (usually 3 to 5)
  - Single correct response
- Can include:
  - Descriptive items
  - Labels
  - Best answer
  - Introductory sentence to be completed
  - Case studies



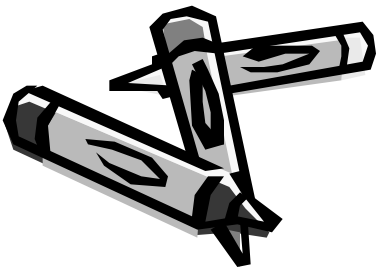
MC most commonly tests

- Knowledge
- Comprehension, and occasionally,
- Occasionally application, analysis, synthesis



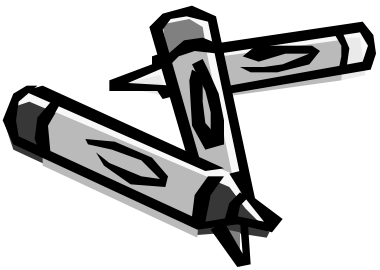
Teachers like MC because:

- Easy to grade
- Can test higher levels
- Familiar to most students
- Reduces guessing factor
- Item analysis possible with computer scoring

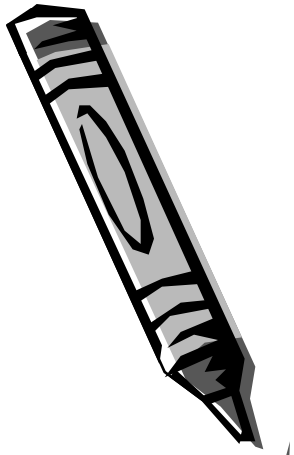


Problems with MC:

- Hard to write a good question at higher cognitive level
- Often tests lower level than desired
- Takes long time to write good Q's
- Hard to construct with only one truly correct answer
- Risk of answer being open to interpretation



Multiple Choice Test-Taking Tips

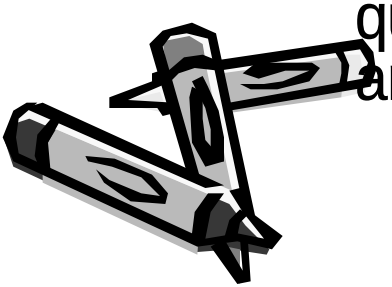


- Read the question before you look at the answer.
- Come up with the answer in your head before looking at the possible answers.
- Then, do read all the choices carefully, because there may be two similar, not identical, ones.
- Try reading stem with each response.
- Eliminate answers you know aren't right.
- Narrow your choices by eliminating obviously wrong answers which are almost identical.

Helpful Hints (MC)

- If one of the statements is false don't choose "All of the above". If there are at least 2 correct responses, “All of the above” is probably right.
- A positive choice is more likely to be true than a negative one.
- The correct answer is usually the choice with the most information.
- Words like "no", "not", “never,” and "none" easily change the meaning of questions, and may eliminate a response choice.

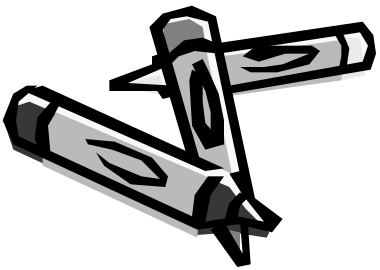
Don’t be discouraged if you can’t answer a question. Leave it and go on. You may find the answer or clues to the answer in later Qs.



Guessing (MC)

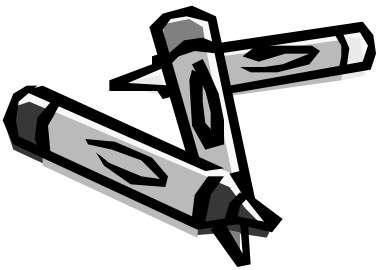
If there is no guessing penalty, always take an educated guess and select an answer.

- ✓ Reject answers that use specific determiners such as: everyone, always, never, etc.
- ✓ Look for grammatical inconsistencies which may help eliminate wrong answers.
- ✓ Choose the longest, most precise answer.
- ✓ Choose answers which use qualifying terms such as: often, most, etc.
- ✓ Choose the answer which first caught your eye.



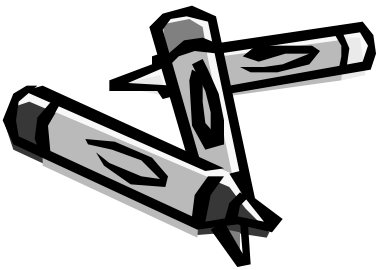
About changing your answer (MC)

- Common belief – don't go back and change answer
- Not always validated by research
- Don't be afraid to change if you:
  - Misread question
  - Found better answer later
  - Remembered something relevant



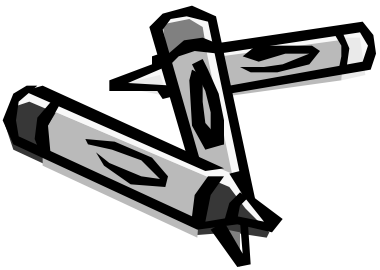
True/False

- Should be clearly right or wrong
- Can test multiple levels, but usually only applied to knowledge and comprehension
- Requires good verbal skills on part of student



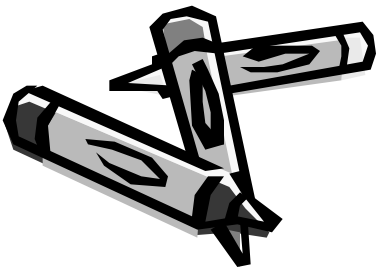
Common testing language for different levels

- All… Most… Many… The difference between… If…when…
- The larger… The higher… The lower…
- The purpose of… is to…
- An example of….
- Observing…reveals that…
- Studying….reveals that…
- One could expect that…
- One method of…is to….



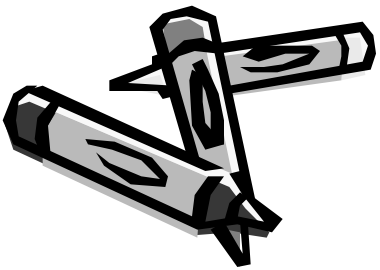
Teachers like T/F because:

- Simple to construct
- Can be used for many levels
- Can be used to look at variety of topics
- Familiar to students
- Easy to score

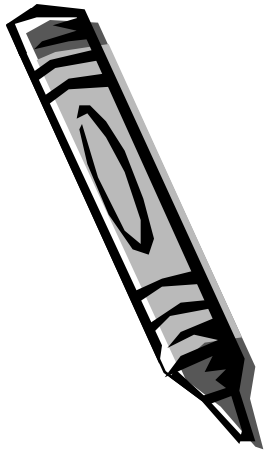


Problems with T/F

- Guessing factor
- Hard to construct brief T/F
- True usually longer than false
- Gives equal weight to all tested material
- Ambiguity hard to avoid
- More suited for lower levels of Bloom



True/False Test-Taking Tips

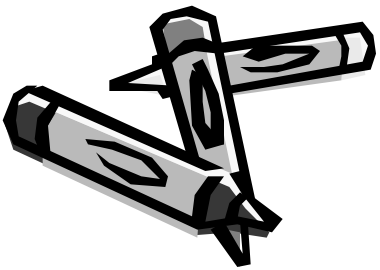


- There are usually more T than F answers.
- If there is no guessing penalty, guess. You have a 50% chance of getting it right.
- Look at the who, what, why, where, when, and how of each statement. All elements must be T.
- If any part of the question is F, it is all F.
- But…if part of a statement is T, that doesn't make the entire statement T.
- True statements tend to be longer.
- Look for the test maker trying to match up two inappropriate pieces of information (events, definitions.

T/F continued

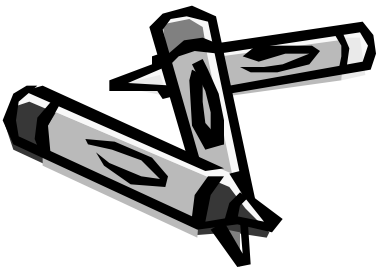
- Qualifiers ("usually, sometimes, & generally“) mean that statement can be considered T or F depending on the circumstances. Usually these type of qualifiers lead to an answer of T.

- Qualifiers like "never, always, and every time” mean that the statement must be true all of the time. Usually these type of qualifiers lead to a F answer.



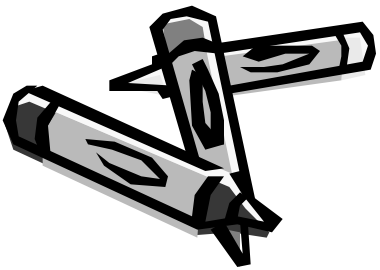
Matching

- Typically used for recall
- Set of stems (or questions) on left and set of answers on right
- Usually 6 to 10 items
- Should provide more answers than stems (if not, you're lucky)



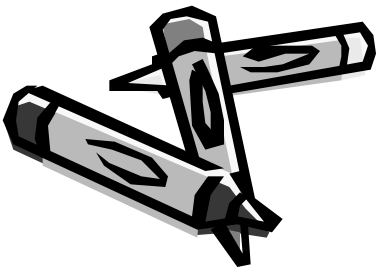
Teachers like Matching because:

- Good at testing ability to recognize relationships and associations
- Fairly easy to construct
- Can be efficient – can modify stems and keep same responses
- Can be used to look at different aspects of single concept



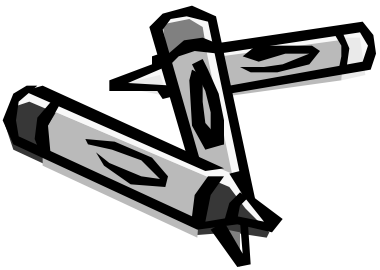
Problems with Matching:

- Emphasis on rote memorization
- Suited mostly to info that can be stated in short phrases
- Promotes a kind of guessing
- Can be tricky – which is the best answer



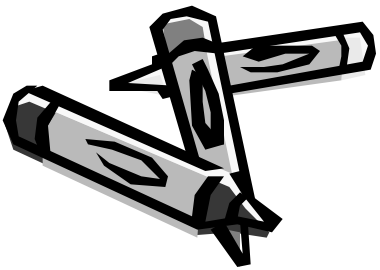
Matching Test-Taking Tips

- The relationship is everything
- Begin with the lengthier column for obtaining info to evaluate items in shorter column
- Match the items you are sure of
- You then have an opportunity for guessing



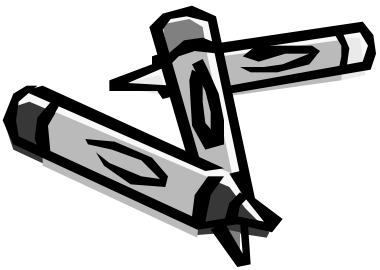
List/Recall/ Fill-in-the-Blank

- Asks student to fill in or complete a statement
- Asks student to provide a single short response
- May require listing



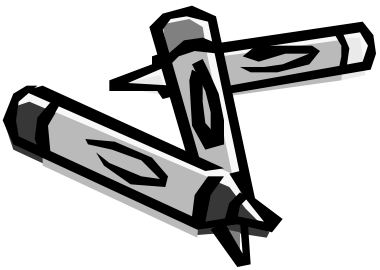
Teachers like these because:

- Simple to construct
- Good measure of recall, not just identifying right answer
- Reduces guessing
- Pinpoints info to be acquired



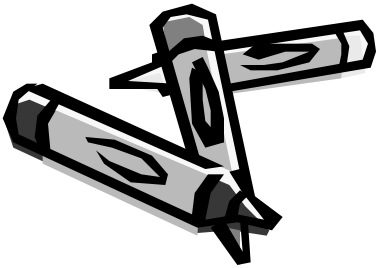
Problems include:

- Waste of time if exact word recall is not necessary
- Subjective grading if produces similar word or phrase
- Not good for testing higher levels
- Hard to grade (e.g., handwriting)



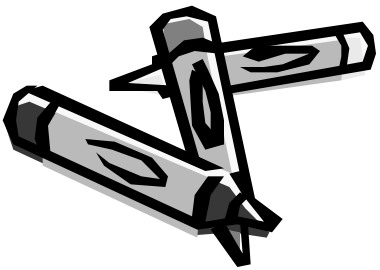
List/Recall/Fill-in-the-Blank Test-Taking Tips

- Read Q carefully, particularly for listing
- Read sentence aloud in your mind, trying to let your brain automatically fill in the word or phrase
- If you have a "feeling" about the word (first letter, syllables), make a note and come back



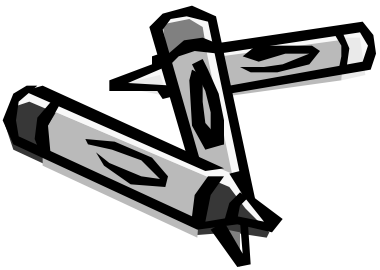
Essay

- Should require use of own words to express conclusions and reasons.
- Often problem-based, cases, simulation questions
- Should provide student with statement of situation, problem, as well as instructions for response



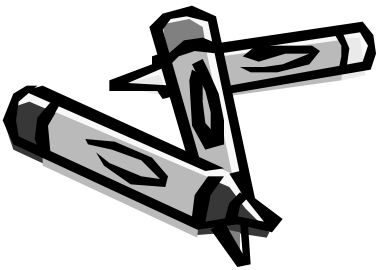
Teachers like essay because:

- Relatively easy to write for higher cognitive levels
- Takes less time to prepare question
- Promotes development of writing and critical thinking



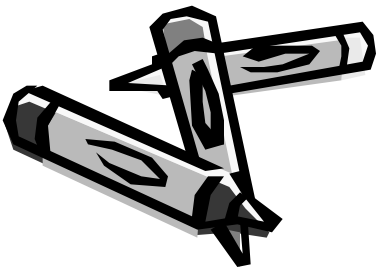
Problems with essays:

- Harder to score and may be subject to scoring bias unless answer key, rubric or other form used
- Time consuming to grade, particularly if feedback is desired
- Oriented toward more language proficient student



Essay Test-Taking Tips

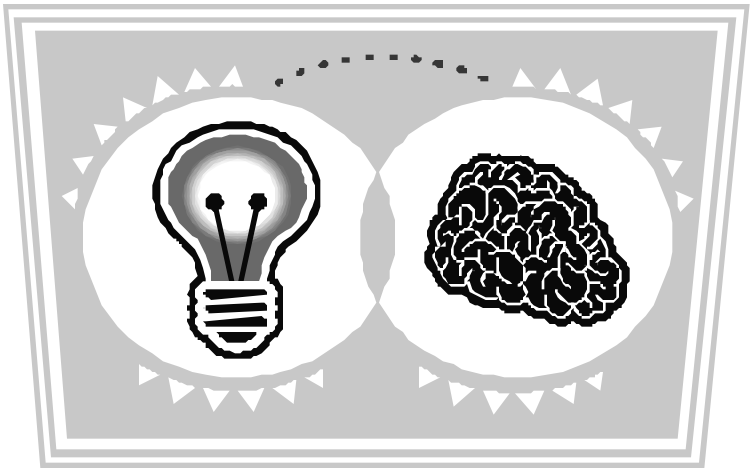
- Restate the question in your answer in some fashion
- Address all relevant points
- Use appropriate transitions between ideas as well as a concluding statement
- Write legibly and proof-read your final product



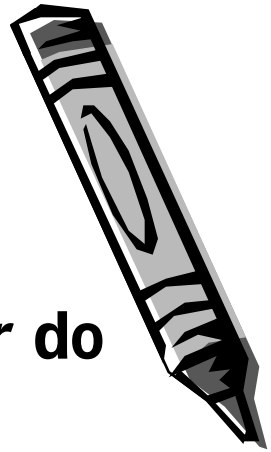
FACT #4

Testing strategies include analyzing your performance/skills:

- Before the exam
- During the exam
- After the exam



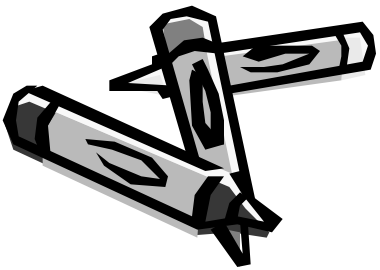
The UT Learning Center
Testing Skills Self-Assessment



Indicate whether you *usually*, *rarely*, or *never* do the following:

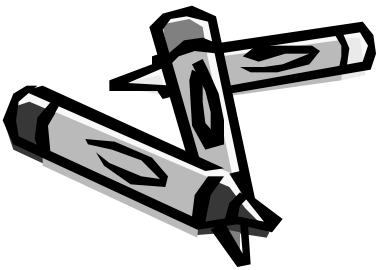
Before tests, how often do you:

- read and take notes or mark the readings
- integrate the reading with the lecture notes
- prepare a test study guide
- predict possible exam questions
- practice answering possible exam questions
- get extra help from the TA, professor, or tutor



During tests, how often do you:

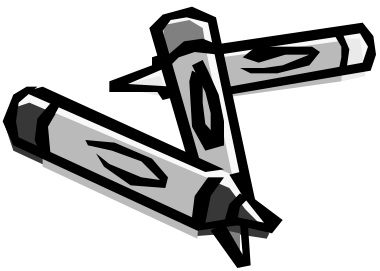
- read through the exam before doing any work
- consider the difficulty level of questions
- underline key words in questions
- outline answers to essay questions
- express a clear thesis in your essay answer
- devote adequate time to each question



After tests, how often do you:

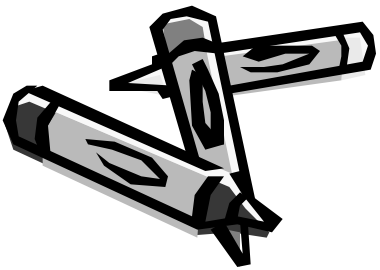
- read the grader's comments and suggestions
- identify the reason you answered incorrectly
- analyze the level of the questions
- visit the grader's office hours
- identify the academic skills needed for success
- create a plan to address the aforementioned issues

If you answered *rarely* or *never* to more than two questions in any area, you may want to improve your strategies.

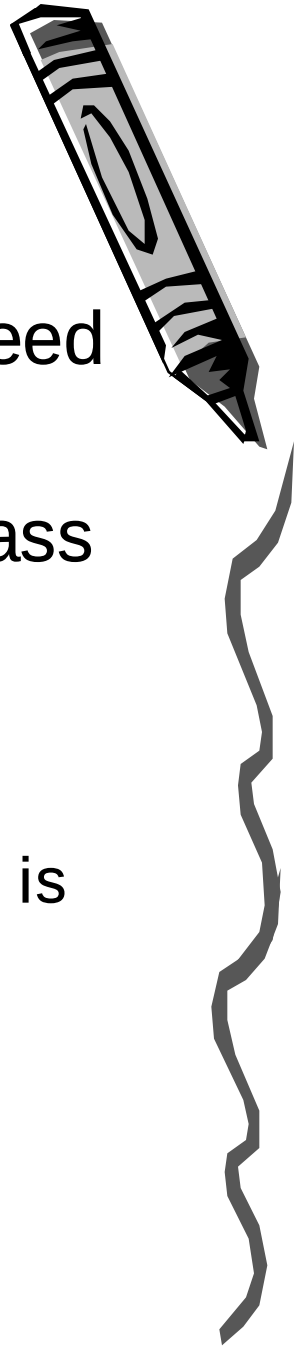


FACT #5

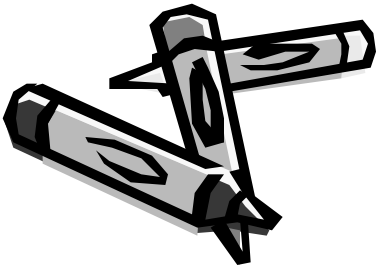
- You need to study:
  - Using your strengths
  - Understanding the level of learning being assessed
  - Analyzing the instructor, test type, and the course material



Note-taking

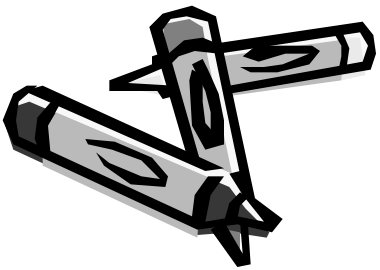


- If you are a poor note-taker, you may need to learn how to improve this skill.
- Don't just rely on taking notes during class
  - Take notes as you read the material- IN ADVANCE of the lecture!
  - After class, review your notes and make additions/corrections while the information is still fresh



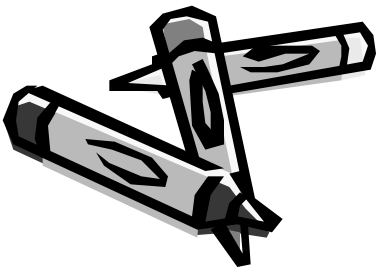
Textbooks

- Keep up with assigned readings
  - PREVIEW to assess topic, length, complexity or organization of material
  - READ at your own pace, taking breaks when necessary
  - RECALL the information by taking notes, asking yourself questions about the material, and/or highlighting after reading the material



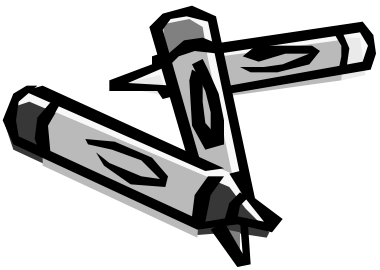
Before the exam:

- Know the settings in which you are able to do your best studying
- Develop a study strategy and timeline
- Re-read all material and notes
- Ask about test format and predict possible test questions
  - Listen for instructor to provide cues such as, “This is important,” or “You need to know this” (or pauses for notetaking)
  - Review study guides (if provided) for phrases such as, “Be able to describe…” or “List…”



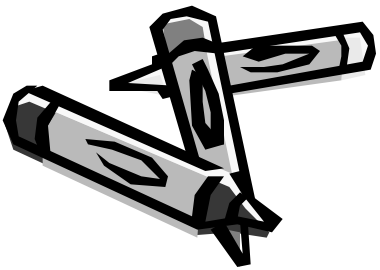
Before the exam:

- Know the "subject-specific" vocabulary—including correct spelling of terms ☺
- For essay questions, practice writing and organizing answers.
  - Even if you do not know the exact essay questions that will be on the test, by preparing in this manner you are improving your writing style and learning the information which may be tested in objective format



During the exam:

- Make sure you are rested and relaxed
- Review the entire test before answering questions
- Plan your time accordingly
- Read questions CAREFULLY
- Identify “key words” in each question to make sure you understand what the question is asking



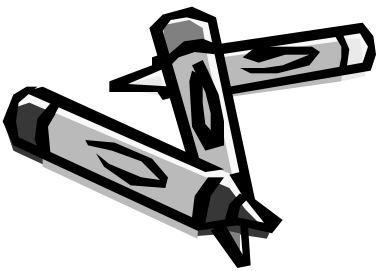
During the exam:

- For essay questions, make an outline before attempting to answer the question
  - A common PITFALL is getting side-tracked and off-topic
  - Allow enough time to review your essay, ensuring you've included all pertinent information and made appropriate corrections

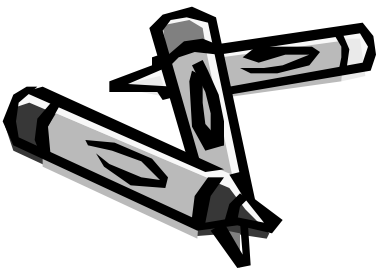
TIP: If you write everything you know about a topic rather than answering the specific question, the instructor assumes you do NOT know the answer!

After the exam:

- Read instructor's comments
- Why did you miss a particular question?
- Did you misinterpret the level of learning being assessed?
- Identify the reasons you had difficulty



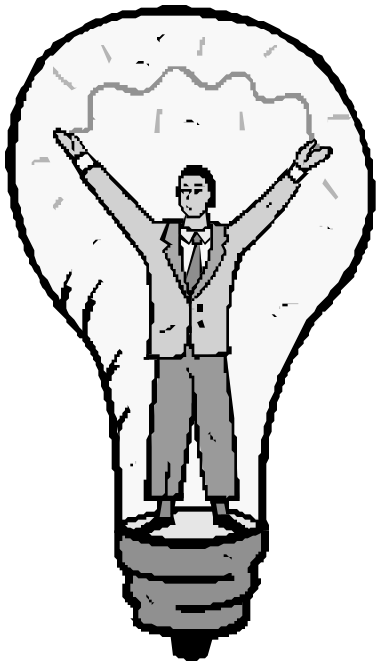
Stress Busters



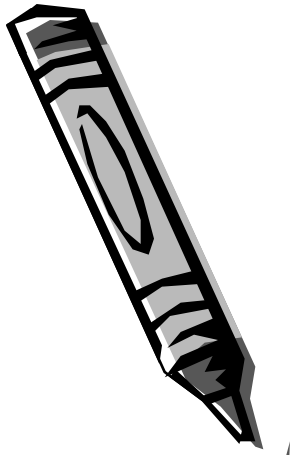
- Don't procrastinate
- Allow plenty of time to study appropriately and complete the exam
- Take breaks to refresh and regroup
- Limit distractions
- RELAX
  - Relaxation exercises can help ease your stress and anxiety level

FACT #6

You have options if you don't do as well as you wanted or expected



A few suggestions:



- Take responsibility for your learning
- Meet with the instructor
- Go to courses on test taking
- Go to websites with helpful hints
- If the problem is one of poor test taking strategies in general, or test anxiety
- Good Internet sources for test-taking strategies and for dealing with test anxiety on next page

Websites

- http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/makinggrade.html
- http://counseling.uchicago.edu/resources/virtualpamphlets/test_taking.shtml
- http://www.studygs.net/
- http://www.public.asu.edu/~ickpl/test-taking.htm
- http://www.southwestern.edu/academic/acser-skills-teststr.html
- http://www.testtakingtips.com/test/gentest.htm
- http://www.d.umn.edu/student/loon/acad/strat/test_take.html
- http://mtsu.edu/~studskl