The Test-Taking Strategy: PIRATES
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The Test-Taking Strategy, researched and developed by The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning provides a sample strategy to improve student performance on classroom tests. Its design includes a six-fold purpose:

1. Students will allocate time and order to each section of the test.
2. Students will read and focus on the instructions.
3. Students will either answer or abandon each test question.
4. Students will make informed choices (guesses) on the questions they don’t know.
5. Students will feel in control of the test and self-talk and “test-wiseness” can help.
6. Students will utilize any and all of their study strategies as they take the test.

An integral part of this strategy is the active role the students take while engaging in the test. It is empowering for students who are test-phobic and/or low achieving. Teaching students a strategy to pass classroom tests is very powerful since passing the course relies on it. Many students feel passing a test is “out of their hands” and there is nothing they can do. Their fears can be calmed and confidence boosted as they see significant gains in their test scores. Quick and obvious gains can be expected as students learn this strategy.

This strategy (and every strategy and routine from CRL) has a set of linking steps represented by a mnemonic. The mnemonic for the Test-Taking Strategy is “PIRATES”. Students are encouraged to visualize a pirate who gets aboard a ship, goes for all the gold and quickly leaves. The same should be true for them when they enter a testing situation; go into the test, get all the possible points and exit! Below are listed the steps of the strategy and what they are all about.

Step 1: Prepare to succeed: Students begin taking the test using the steps PASS:

- **P**: Put your name and PIRATES on the test,
- **A**: Allot time and order to the sections of the test,
- **S**: Say your affirmations and
- **S**: Start within two minutes

Step 2: Inspect the instructions: Students are taught to use the steps RUN:

- **R**: Read the instructions,
- **U**: Underline what to do and where to do it,
- **N**: Note any special requirements.
Step 3: Read, Remember, Reduce: In this step they begin to answer the questions using the techniques of:

- **READ** the whole question,
- **REMEMBER** what you’ve studied, and
- **REDUCE** your choices, marking out the choices that you know aren’t applicable.

Step 4: Answer or Abandon: Students have a choice to either **answer** the question or **abandon** it to make the best use of time. If they **abandon** it they must place a mark next to it to indicate they’ll come back to it. They recycle through this step answering everything they know on the test and then turning back to the ones they are unsure of.

Step 5: Turn Back: When they get to the end of the test they **turn back** to those abandoned questions using the ACE guessing techniques described below.

Step 6: Estimate: Using the **ACE** guessing techniques students follow the sequence of:

- Avoiding absolute words,
- Choosing the longest and most detailed answer and
- Eliminating similar choices.

Step 7: Survey: Now that they have completed all the steps the student must look over the test one more time to **survey** if they have answered all the abandoned questions and only change an answer if they are positively sure it is right. Usually their first choice is the correct one.

This strategy is taught to students using the SIM model (Strategic Instructional Model) which is based on good and sound teaching practices. The model begins with a pretest to determine what strategies, if any, students use when taking tests, and gain their commitment to learn it. Then the teacher describes each step of the strategy to them, models how it would look when they would use it and the student in turn verbalizes each step to 100% accuracy. It is your intention for them to generalize this strategy on not only your tests, but all other classroom tests in the future.

Here is a strategy to help our students on the road to becoming lifelong and successful learners! For more information on this strategy go to The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning website @ [http://www.kucrl.org/sim/strategies.shtml](http://www.kucrl.org/sim/strategies.shtml)

http://pccc.libguides.com/dss
http://www.vcll.org/pages/newsletters/01_02_fall/testtaking.htm
Test-Taking Strategy: PIRATES

1. **Prepare to succeed**
   - Put your name and PIRATES on the test
   - Allot time and order to sections
   - Say affirmations
   - Start within two minutes

2. **Inspect the instructions**
   - Read instructions carefully
   - Underline what to do and where to respond
   - Notice special requirements

3. **Read, Remember and Reduce**
   - Read the whole question
   - Remember what you studied
   - Reduce the choices

4. **Answer or abandon**
   - Answer the question or abandon the question for the moment

5. **Turn back**

6. **Estimate**
   - Avoid absolutes
   - Choose the longest or most detailed choice
   - Eliminate similar choices

7. **Survey**
   - Survey to ensure all questions are answered
   - Switch an answer only if you’re sure