Test Taking Tips

Prepare Physically

- **Maintain your regular sleep routine.** Don’t cut back on your sleep in order to cram in additional study hours. Especially during final exam weeks, it is important to be well rested in order to remain alert for extended periods of time. This is no time for partying!

- **Follow your regular exercise program.** Walking, jogging, swimming, or other aerobic activities are effective stress reducers that may help you think more clearly and provide positive -and needed- breaks from studying.

- **Eat right.** You really are what you eat. Avoid drinking more than one or two caffeinated drinks a day or eating food that are high in sugar or fat. Eat a light breakfast before a morning exam. Choose fruits, vegetables, and other foods that are high in energy-rich complex carbohydrates. Ask the instructor if you can bring a bottle of water with you to the exam.

Prepare Emotionally

- **Know your material.** If you have given yourself adequate time to review, you will enter the classroom confident that you are in control. Study by testing yourself or quizzing each other in a study group or learning community so you will be sure you really know the material.

- **Practice relaxing.** Some students experience upset stomachs, sweaty palms, racing hearts, or other unpleasant physical symptoms of test anxiety before an exam. See the Middlesex counselors about help with relaxation techniques if you experience test anxiety.

- **Use positive self talk.** Instead of telling yourself “I never do well on math tests” or “I’ll never be able to learn all the information for my history essay exam,” make positive statements, such as “I have attended all the lectures, done my homework, and passed the quizzes. Now I’m ready to pass the test!”
Prepare for Test Taking

- **Find out about the test.** Ask your instructor whether the test will be essay, multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, or another format. Ask how long the test will last and how it will be graded. Ask whether all questions will have the same point value and any other information you think might help you prepare for the test. Never miss the last class before an exam, because your instructor may summarize valuable information!

- **Design and exam plan.** Use the information about the test as you design a plan for preparing. Build that preparation into a schedule of review dates. Develop a to-do list of the major steps you need to take in order to be ready. The week before the exam, set aside a schedule of one-hour blocks of time for review, and make notes of specifically what you hope to accomplish during each hour.

- **Join a study group.** Numerous research studies have shown that joining a study group is one of the most effective strategies for preparing for an exam. You can benefit from different views of your instructors’ goals, objectives, and emphasis; have partners quiz you on facts and concepts; and gain the enthusiasm and friendship of others to help sustain your motivation.

- **Get a tutor.** If you think tutoring is just for failing students, you’re wrong! Often the very best students seek tutorial assistance to ensure their A’s. Make sure to visit the FREE academic support services on both campuses.