

Writing Practice Tests While You Study

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One of the best ways to score high grades is to create your own practice tests. It's a little extra work while you're studying, but if that investment results in higher grades, it's definitely worth it.

In their book, *The Adult Student's Guide to Survival & Success*, Al Siebert and Mary Karr advise:

"Imagine that you are the instructor and have to write some questions that will test the class on the material covered. When you do this for each course you will be amazed at how close your test will match the one your instructor creates."

Creating a Practice Test

While you're taking notes in class, write a "Q" in the margin beside material that would make a good test question. If you [take notes on a laptop](#), assign a highlighter color to the text, or mark it in some other way that is meaningful to you.

You can find practice tests online, but these will be tests for special subjects or exams, like the [ACT](#) or [GED](#). These won't help you with your particular test, but they can give you a good idea of how test questions are stated. Remember that your teacher wants you to succeed. The best way to find out what kind of test he or she gives is to ask. Explain to him or her that you want to write your own practice tests, and ask if they will tell you what format the questions will take so you can make the most of your study time.

Siebert and Karr suggest that as you read your textbooks and lecture notes, jot down questions that occur to you. You'll be creating your own practice test as you study. When you're ready, take the test without checking your notes or books. Make the practice as real as possible, including giving partial answers when you aren't sure and limiting the time allowed.

Suggestions for Practice Tests

In their book, Siebert and Karr make a few practice test suggestions:

- Ask at the beginning of the course when tests will be given and in what format
- Write your practice tests in the format your teacher will use (essay, multiple choice, etc.)
- Ask the librarian if there is a collection of old exams you can study
- Find out if there is a student manual that accompanies your textbook
- Ask former students about the kind of tests your teacher gives

- Ask your teacher for suggestions for test prep
- Ask a friend, family member, or fellow student to quiz you

Test Question Formats

Familiarize yourself with the different kinds of test question formats:

- Multiple Choice: You are given three or more choices and must select the correct answer. Sometimes, "all of the above" is a choice.
- True or False: These are usually used when you are being required to memorize facts. They are often tricky. Read them carefully.
- Fill-in-the-Blank: These are similar to multiple choice except that you must know the answer without being given choices.
- Essay or Open-Ended: These questions test your comprehension of a subject. You'll be given a question that you must answer at length, giving specific examples, or you may be given a statement to agree or disagree with. These may sound challenging to you, but if you know your stuff, this type of test question also allows you to shine. Be ready and make the most of the opportunity.