

10 Helpful Tips For Getting An A On Any Test

June 12, 2013

Three years ago, when I went back to school at the age of 27, I was seriously worried about my abilities to succeed academically. Especially because I struggled the first time around and because I wasn't sure I had 'it' in me. My first semester back, I got lucky with a public speaking professor who on the first day of class asked us to take out a piece of paper and write down something we wanted to be as if we were already there, starting with "I am...". At the time I was determined to succeed in school, so the first thing that came to mind was "I am an A student" and that's what I wrote down. Now many semesters later, I have a 4.0 GPA and still have my *sworn* statement nearby. Of course, the piece of paper isn't magic, but it helped me change my mind set – If I am an A student, then I have to *act* like one. With this new found outlook on myself, I was able to revise my ancient study techniques and come up with the ones that work for me now. However, everyone learns differently, so just because it worked for me it might not work for you. Nevertheless, if you are struggling academically, I strongly recommend looking over my methods and hopefully you can pick out a few that work for you.

1. TAKE NOTES IN CLASS

Did I lose you already? I know taking notes is not the most exciting thing in the world but it does help you memorize the material better. Also, the most important aspect of note taking – if your teacher/professor brought it up in class, chances are it will be on the test. So, your notes give you a good base for study topics when it comes time to study for that test.

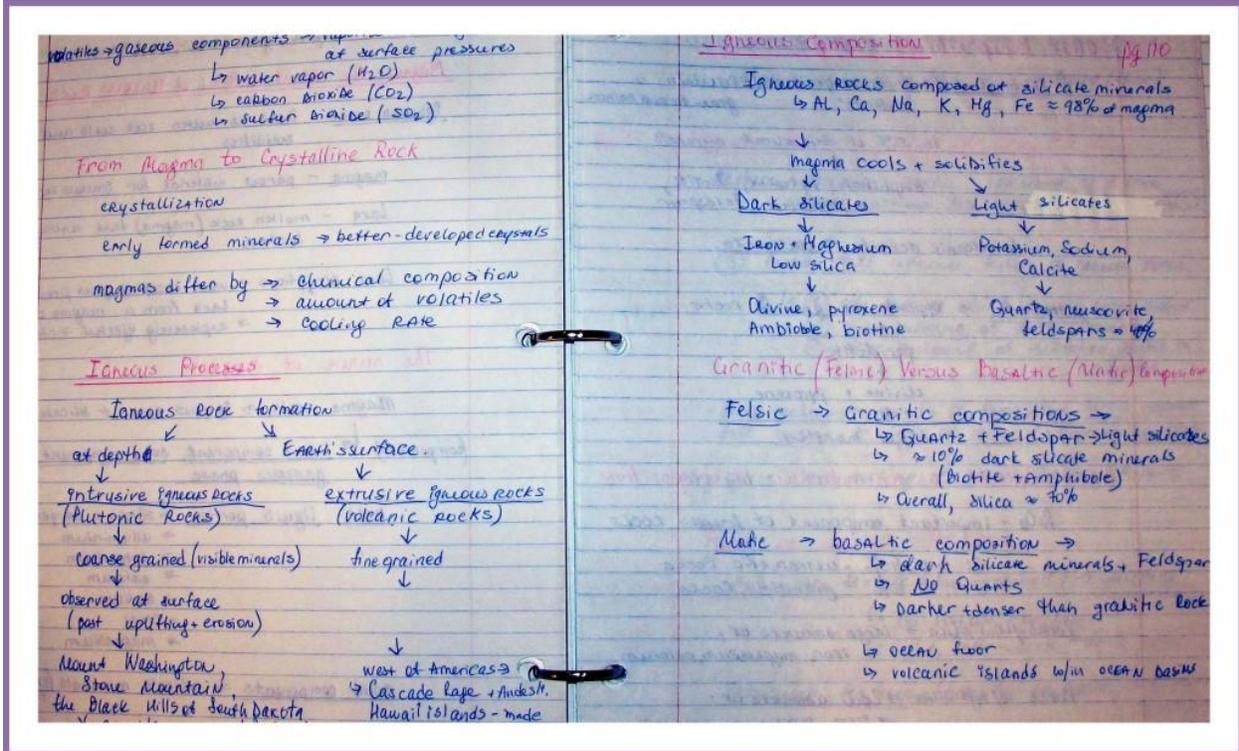
2. RECORD THE LECTURE

If you can't be bothered taking notes, or can't keep up, it's a good idea to record the lecture. Many professors will allow you to record their lectures and yes, you should ask first, because there is a legality aspect involved. However, I highly doubt you plan to sell or distribute the audio file commercially and it will only be used privately, so I am pretty sure you can get away with an inconspicuous recording. iPhone's are pretty good in this regard and such recordings have helped me a great deal few times in the past.



3. READ THE CHAPTER AND TAKE NOTES

If your professor does not provide you with a study guide for a test, it is safe to assume that anything printed in the book and anything said in class is fair game for those tricky test questions. In this case, you have to read the chapters assigned and take short notes. I prefer to do it with bullet points and an outline format, as shown in the picture below. By writing down notes you will remember the material better and for review you could just go over your notes, instead of reading the entire chapter again. Also, it is best to go over the chapter *before* the class – if you already have an outline the lecture will be a review and you can just highlight and make additional notes on your outline and you will be prepared for the class, thus, you can score participation points – win win.



4. FLASH CARDS

I am a huge fan of flash cards. Some people are lucky enough to be able to read a page and memorize it right away, I, on the other hand, have to sit there and memorize it until I am blue in the face and my brain has melted. It helps if your flashcards are structured in the question-answer form, so your mind can prepare itself for the test questions. Flashcards should include: all definitions from the chapters assigned, all important aspects from the lectures and all important concepts from the book.

5. MEMORIZE THE DEFINITIONS

Memorizing the definitions has saved me more times than I can count. If you at least know all the key words from every definition you are guaranteed to pass the test. These little guys always appear on the tests in one form or another and even if you do not understand the concept, knowing the exact definition will save you. Some definitions are way too long to memorize, so focus on the key words and use associations. It also helps to break down the definition into smaller parts, for example:



(Actual definition: Chronic Disease – degenerative disease characterized by the deterioration of the body organs, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes. Note the highlighted #3 – it stands for how many points I would need to remember for that definitions.)

6. STUDY THE REVIEW QUESTIONS AT THE END OF EACH CHAPTER

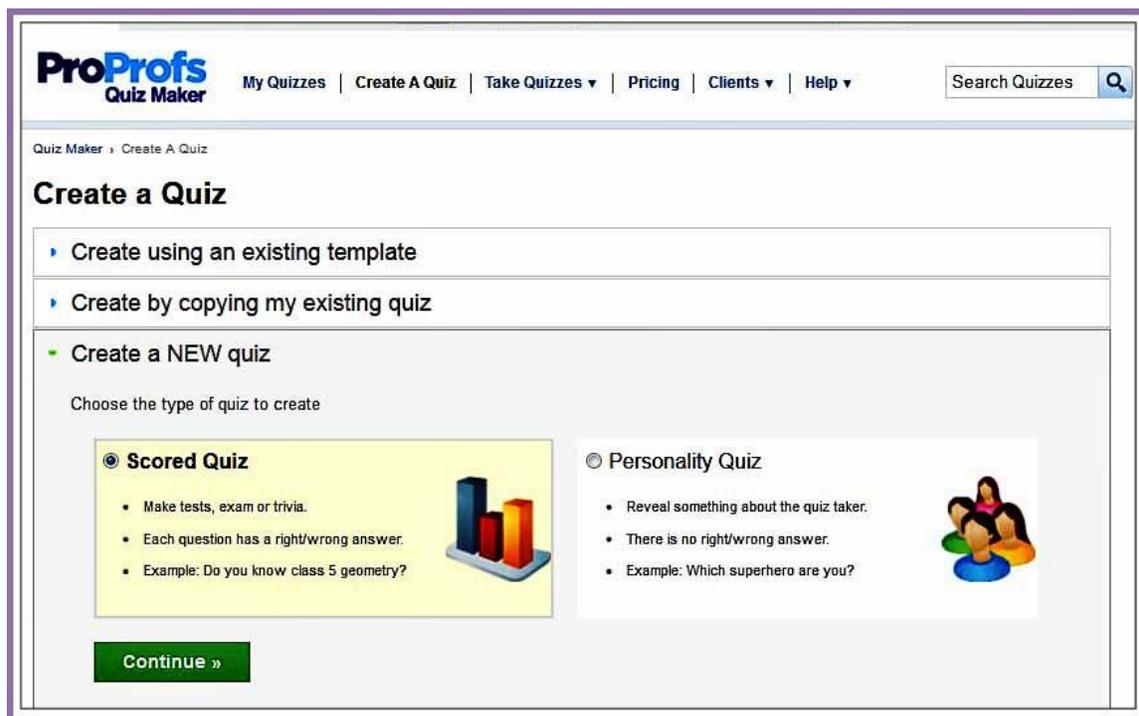
Studying the review questions at the end of the chapters helps me review; also some professors add those questions (or very similar ones) to the test. Better yet, for each question make a flash card and memorize the question and the RIGHT answer, just in case. Note: do not even look at the wrong answers on multiple question tests – knowing the one and only right answer will make it pop out at you on the test, because your eyes and brain will be familiar with that answer.

7. UTILIZE YOUR "ON THE GO" TIME

Make use of all your time when studying for a test, especially those times when you think you can't study like driving, working out, cleaning, cooking or getting pretty. Even if you can't physically review notes or the flashcards, you CAN listen to that lecture you recorded. Also, you can record an audio file where you are going over your flash cards out loud or are reading notes – listening to these recordings on the go, will help you create more study time. Repetition is still key to studying for any test.

8. CREATE AN ONLINE QUIZ

If you can make an online quiz a week before your actual test and go over it at least twice a day, you will increase your chances for an A tremendously. I use proprofs.com for these purposes, it's free and it's pretty good at creating tests. Do not waste your time on creating multiple choice test questions for yourself, since you still MUST focus on the right answers only. Instead, try fill in the blank questions for studying the definitions, or matching where you match the definition to the correct word.



The screenshot shows the ProProfs Quiz Maker website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the ProProfs logo and links for 'My Quizzes', 'Create A Quiz', 'Take Quizzes', 'Pricing', 'Clients', and 'Help'. A search bar is also present. Below the navigation bar, the page title is 'Quiz Maker > Create A Quiz'. The main heading is 'Create a Quiz'. There are three main options: 'Create using an existing template', 'Create by copying my existing quiz', and 'Create a NEW quiz'. Under 'Create a NEW quiz', there is a sub-heading 'Choose the type of quiz to create'. Two options are visible: 'Scored Quiz' (selected) and 'Personality Quiz'. The 'Scored Quiz' option includes a list of features: 'Make tests, exam or trivia.', 'Each question has a right/wrong answer.', and 'Example: Do you know class 5 geometry?'. The 'Personality Quiz' option includes: 'Reveal something about the quiz taker.', 'There is no right/wrong answer.', and 'Example: Which superhero are you?'. A green 'Continue »' button is located at the bottom left of the quiz selection area.

9. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STUDY MATERIALS THAT CAME WITH YOUR TEXT BOOK

Today, most textbooks are equipped with an online study center which you absolutely should take advantage of. This is especially great for math classes, as they give you many problems to try and provide detailed explanations. Also, use the online tests and quizzes that accompany each chapter to help you review, if you know most of those questions – you are golden, if some are still out of your reach turn them into flashcards and go over them a few times before the test day.

10. ASK SOMEONE TO HELP YOU REVIEW THE DAY BEFORE THE TEST

This one is very important. Once you are finished with all the studying and memorization, ask a friend, significant other, a sibling, a parent or a co-worker to help you review. All that this person has to do is ask you the questions on the flash cards and make sure you give the right answers. Talking with someone and discussing specific questions/answers will help you associate those questions with a specific conversation and it will be easier to recall the information on the test.

Of course it is very important to try and get some sleep the night before your test, which I know is often impossible, but pulling an all-nighter will most likely hurt you, not help you. If you can't afford to sleep for the whole 8 hours, at least take a short nap to clear your head. Also, make sure to start the study process at least a week before the test – few hours a day for 7 days will give you enough time to review and memorize everything that you need to.

I hope these tips help you with your next exam, so you could get that **A** you deserve!

Have you used any of these techniques to study for your tests? Which ones work best for you? Do you have your own unique way? Please share in the comments below.

