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The logic and psychology of this rule are simple: students who view tests as punishment, and those who view tests as performances, each get what they are looking for.

Rule 12 is a relatively new one: *When shafted, appeal*. Unfortunately, many professors are like St. Augustine, who prayed, "For so it is, O Lord my God, I measure it; but what it is I measure, I do not know." There is

an extraordinary amount of inept testing: a recent book published by *Change* magazine entitled *The Teaching and Grading of Students* delivers a wholesale indictment of testing practices in higher education.

The bad news is that most professors are enormously unsophisticated about constructing tests; the good news is that many of them admit this openly. When presented with a convincing argument that a particular

test question is ambiguous, misleading, inaccurately worded or simply unfair, many professors will attempt to make some kind of adjustment. Most professors do not consider themselves experts in testing and cognitive measurement. Professors are (or consider themselves to be) primarily experts in a particular academic discipline—physics, or history, or accounting, or whatever—and are only secondarily (and for many, begrudgingly) responsible for measuring student performance. If you believe you have been tested or graded unfairly, you should not hesitate to discuss the complaint with the course instructor. Frequently, such conversations will be productive: the instructor will alter the grade or discount the question, or you will learn your error.

For students who remain unsatisfied following their initial conversation, many institutions have developed in recent years a grievance procedure for handling formal grade appeals. These appeal routes are usually available to any student who lodges a charge of unfair, arbitrary, capricious or discriminatory treatment. Many institutions also employ an "ombudsman" to help students resolve both personal and academic problems and complaints.

College students have traditionally retained a healthy skepticism about the ultimate value of testing and grading. Like most educators, they realize (perhaps unconsciously) that no one really knows what the exact relationship between tests, measurement and learning is or ought to be. Observing the 12 rules of test-taking described above will not make the poor student a superior one. They are, however, a set of practical guidelines which will assist most students in performing on tests according to their true abilities.

Finally, while testing is indisputably a game, don't discount the fact that it is a challenging and endlessly fascinating game played for reasonably high stakes, and quite capable of teaching you at least as much about solving life's problems as the most rigorous course in Transactional Analysis or Sino-Soviet Relations. The kind of thinking required for rapid organization and performing well under stress may, in the long run, be of greater importance than the particular details of any course of study. Such thinking may be, in fact, what a college education is all about.

Don Eastman, an experienced test-taker, claims he enthusiastically applied every rule in this article with much success.

A Concise Guide to 12 Kinds of Tests

Demonstration. In lab courses, you may be expected to show the instructor that you can perform certain basic operations, such as preparing a microscope slide. The only way to study for this is to practice the operation regularly in class until you're certain you are doing it correctly.

Essay. The first thing to do on an essay exam is to read each question carefully—watching for words like *explain*, *compare*, *describe*, *analyze*, *contrast*—and be sure you understand what you're being asked to do. If the question says to *compare* two items, it won't do to simply *describe* them. Then work your way from the easiest questions to the hardest questions, being careful to think through each answer before you write it. An effective technique is to use as many specific names and references as you can. If the professor gives your answer only a surface reading, these buzz words may make your answers seem that much more credible. If you run out of time, write outline answers.

Fill-in-the-Blank. Sometimes called "completion" exams, such tests require you to provide the correct word or phrase that completes the statement. One way to study for this type of test is to organize the material into definitive statements as you go.

Identification. You usually find such tests in the lab sections of science courses. You're shown a collection of specimens which you have to identify and provide information about. The way to prepare is to memorize several distinguishing characteristics for each item. Another type of identification test provides the name of a person or place and asks you to supply as many facts about that person or place as you can.

Matching. The task here is to associate an item on one list with its complement on another list—for instance, matching people's names with their accomplishments, words with definitions and the like. Obviously, you should first match the items you are most sure of and then, unless there's a penalty for guessing, match the remaining items through the process of elimination. Check the instructions before you start: can any of the "answers" be used more than once?

Multiple Choice. Theoretically such tests should be easy because the answer is one of the alternatives and through elimination you should be able to figure out which one. A common mistake people make is to choose the first statement that seems right without reading the rest—the object of many such tests is to choose the *best* answer from more than one correct statement.

Open Book. Most open book exams are constructed in such a way that you cannot readily find the answer in the textbook. For example, you may be told to analyze the facts or interpret them in some way. Nonetheless, the book can help you recall buzz words and phrases.

Oral Exams. These are probably the hardest of all exams because most people are better at padding their writing than their speech. Do not attempt to bluff your way through a question you're not prepared to answer. Instead, when a question is asked, consider for a moment what you *can* talk about with some assurance and then proceed with such enthusiasm that the professor is reluctant to redirect you.

Problem Solving. The best way to study for such exams is to work practice problems until you are confident that you understand how to work the formula in all cases. When you finish each problem on the test, recheck each step of the answer to be sure you haven't made a mistake. Then label your answer to help the grader find it.

Short Answer. This kind of test requires you to answer each question in several sentences rather than the longer answer required on an essay exam. You study for it much as you do for an essay exam.

Take Home. This type of exam is really a series of short themes which you prepare outside of class, using whatever resources you want. Profs usually set a limit on the amount of time you are to spend writing the exam, but students who score high often exceed this time limit considerably. The professor expects you to produce well-crafted answers when you're working with both books and time in the quiet of your own room.

True-False. You read a statement and pronounce it true or false. It's as simple as that. Don't try to interpret a statement too closely—most true-false questions are clearly stated—but do look out for words like *always*, *never* or *only* which usually indicate that the statement is false.