Test Taking Strategies

These are only pointers that have worked for other students.

Multiple Choice Questions

The Question:
✓ Key thing is to read the question carefully-do not skim, read it before reading answers.
✓ Select the key words and then underline, circle, or highlight them: these include such words as “except”, “first”, “initially”, “at this time”, “inaccurate”, “unsafe”, “least”, “avoid”
✓ The above words are asking you to prioritize or rank order and determine what is incorrect or false
✓ Ask yourself what is the question about
✓ Ask yourself “what is the question asking me”
✓ If the stem says “further teaching is needed..” you know you are looking for an answer that contains incorrect information
✓ Reword the question in another way

The answer:
✓ Cover the answers with a piece of paper
✓ Don’t jump the gun and think you see the right answer immediately
✓ Read all choices (one-by-one) before selecting the correct response
✓ Ask yourself if it answers the question that was asked
✓ Is it directly related to the stem of the question
✓ Several options may seem correct, but you need the one that is best given the situation presented
✓ Eliminate responses that you know are wrong before selecting a correct answer
✓ If all options are nursing actions that you could do, re-read the question to further clarify what is needed
✓ Look at the answers to see if there is a similar word or paraphrase in the correct answer that corresponds with words in the stem*

Identify the subject or central person who is the subject of the question*

Example:
A patient who has had a mastectomy says to the nurse “My husband can’t look at my incision and hasn’t shown any interest in having sex since my surgery”. What should be the initial action of the nurse?*
   a. arrange to speak with the husband about his concerns
   b. plan to teach the husband that the wife needs his support
   c. explore the patients feelings about her husbands behavior
   d. make an appointment with Reach for Recovery or some other support group for the patient
The above question is obviously about the wife. Options a and b are targeted to the husband. A key word is “initial”, so even though you may want to speak to the husband it would not be your initial action. The nurse must address the patients concern first: her concern is her husband’s behavior.

- don’t go back and change answers unless you receive a clue from another question or you remember something specifically
- keep in mind that all parts of the answer must be correct in order for it to be the correct response

Select all that apply questions

Some simple tips I gathered from ATI site and information I have in my head for responding to questions that ask you to select all that apply:

1. Read each option separately and don't compare options
2. Re-read the stem with each option
3. Don't think about how many options should be chosen
4. Review each option as if it were a true false question (be sure to think "is it true or false as it applies to the stem)
5. Never ask "What if" or "add content" to the options or stem
6. Identify key words - determine what the question is about
7. Remember there will always be two or more. so if you can eliminate options that obviously don't apply it will make it easier to identify others.

General pointers:
1. Manage your time, so that you do not feel rushed and get anxious
2. Make educated guesses, if you can eliminate some responses but still are not sure of the answer, guess based on partial knowledge
3. About every 10 questions take a pause, close your eyes and take deep breaths for 3-5 seconds. This clears your mind for the next section. Do this also if you feel yourself getting anxious.

Study skills:
1. Read before going to class, even if it is just skimming
2. Use the posted power points as a guide for what to focus on
3. Take notes
4. Find a buddy in the class that you can review with or get information from if you have to be out
5. Of utmost importance in any class, find a time to review your notes everyday. This means take the time to read through your notes and read over the power points. This does not mean sitting down to study in-depth, just reviewing. When it is time to study for an exam, you will be surprised at how much you already know.
6. Ask yourself questions about the content? For example, if you are studying infections-talk yourself through what might happen if a patient has an infection and how does one get an infection?. Ask your self-what happens to other body systems if a patient has an infection? Of course you always will need to know the facts.

7. The more routine you can make studying the better, by routine I mean study or review at the same time each day, but remember to also take at least one day off. During this time turn off your phone, be in a place where you are undisturbed, and there are no distractions such as the TV.

8. At the end of each class if time permits sit and review the power points for that day before leaving the room. This way you will know if there is something that you need clarification on. After it cools off for a day or so you won’t be able to recall what is confusing or unclear.

9. When preparing for a test/exam, once you feel prepared do a little more studying and reviewing. This over prepares you a little for the test and is a confidence booster and an anxiety reducer! (Sylvestri, 2008).

Academic Counselors
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