

Approaching Exams Confidently

Intro. to Medical Education at Iowa
Academic Achievement Technique 5
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The Basics

▣ What makes a good testing experience?

1. You understand the question.
2. You know the answer!

▣ How do you work for a good testing experience?

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Study!

Practice
reading skills!

Answering Test Questions

☐ So, we all start a test, what steps do most of us follow to answer it?

1. See and read the question.
2. Process the grammar and word meanings.
3. Understand the question as a whole.
4. Remember the question while we look at the answers.
5. Select the best answer.

Physical & Mental Skills

☐ To complete these steps, we need...

1. Visual recognition
2. Linguistic interpretation
3. Reading comprehension
4. Short & long-term memory
5. Critical thinking skills



Reading-Related Hurdles

☐ What are we going to talk about?

1. Reading speed
2. Difficult grammatical structures in formal writing
3. Difficult vocabulary in formal writing
4. Short-term memory
5. Reading comprehension skills
 - building mental models, inferring, predicting, paraphrasing, summarizing, distinguishing fact & opinion, determining main ideas & supporting details



Reading Speed

▣ A 42-year-old woman complains of a burning pain in the upper middle region of her abdomen. The pain usually occurs about 2 hours after a meal and frequently awakens her at night. Antacids can usually relieve the pain within a few minutes. An x-ray film reveals a typical duodenal ulcer identified as a discrete crater in the proximal portion of the duodenal bulb. Because the woman does not have a history of chronic use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* is assumed to be the major factor in the etiology of the ulcer. Which of the following is likely to be normal in this woman?

Reading Speed Practice

☐ Activities to improve reading speed should make you work on:

- Moving your eyes faster
- Recognizing word shapes more quickly
- Not reading every word

☐ Balance the need for speed with the need for understanding!



See your handout
for practice activities!

Complicated Grammar

- ☐ “A scientist exposes a culture of bacterium with minimal nutritional requirements to a chemical mutagen, then streaks out the bacteria on plates filled with a complex medium supplemented with all necessary nutrients. ...”
- ☐ “... She was fired from her present firm because on three separate occasions over the past 2 years, without authorization from her clients, she sold all the securities in their accounts and invested the money in securities that had glossy portfolios, but were worthless. ...”

Simplifying Complex Grammar

- ☐ Split the sentence and make single subject-verb clauses.
- ☐ Place events in chronological (or sensible) order.
- ☐ Make passive verbs active.
- ☐ Move adverbs out of verb phrases.
- ☐ Pull out questions buried in multi-clause sentences.

Identifying & Changing Grammar!

1. “Multiple blood cultures are taken, and gram-positive cocci are isolated.”
2. “Which artery was likely involved?”
3. “The part of the vascular system that is affected in this disorder is derived from which of the following embryologic structures?”
4. “A 13-year-old boy presents to the emergency department with a deep skin abrasion on his knee.”
5. “Laboratory studies reveal a platelet count of 20,000/mm³.”

Complicated Vocabulary

- ☐ Vocabulary can make tests difficult when:
1. You start in a new field and familiar words have new meanings.
 - ☐ “The patient presents to the emergency department.”
 - ☐ “oral administration of juice”
 - ☐ The patient has a history of chronic aspirin use.
 2. Formal expressions are used that do not get their meaning directly from the words they include.
 - ☐ which of the following, the fact that, in order that...

More Complicated Vocabulary

- ☐ Vocabulary can make tests difficult when:
3. You need to determine the probability or strength of claim of a statement.
 - most likely, pervasive, persistent, often, is associated with...
 4. Very closely related synonyms are used to create subtle meaning distinctions.
 - The mother states she often feeds the infant.
 - The mother mentions she often feeds the infant.
 - The fingers appear claw-like.
 - The fingers are claw-like.

Reading Comprehension

- ☐ Prepare before you read.
- ☐ Build a model in your head as you read.
- ☐ Focus on why you are being asked the question.
- ☐ Decide what details are important as you go.

Reading Comprehension

- A 69-year-old edentulous alcoholic man, who lives alone, is admitted to the hospital for evaluation of a shoulder wound that is not healing well. On physical examination, numerous ecchysomes are noted on the posterior aspect of his legs and thighs. Careful examination of the man's skin reveals minute hemorrhages around hair follicles and splinter hemorrhages in the nail beds. Laboratory examination is remarkable for a hemoglobin of 10 g/dL; no other hematologic abnormalities are noted. Which of the following is the most appropriate therapy for this disorder?