Making and Taking Practice Tests

Practicing the exact behavior you will be required to perform in a test situation not only prepares you to do well, it also helps you to relax and build your confidence. After successfully passing practice tests, you are less likely to feel the uneasiness and tension about tests that may have accompanied your old study routines. You will know you have studied the right questions, and you will sleep better for knowing you have studied correctly. Here is how to make and take practice tests:

- Determine the amount of time you'll be given to take your instructor's exam; take practice tests over the same length of time. Taking tests under realistic pressure is important. If you force yourself to do so, you'll feel more comfortable when you're in the actual testing situation.

- Arrange the questions you've been accumulating from chapters, lecture notes, study groups, old exams, and other sources into practice tests.

- Try to put the questions into the same format that the test will offer (multiple choice, short essay, and so on). Old tests will give you a good idea of the format your instructor is likely to use.

- Take the practice tests under conditions as similar as possible to those under which you'll be tested. The classroom in which you will be tested is the best place to take practice exams, or come to the Assessment Center for a simulated classroom situation.

- Try to answer your questions without referring to your books or other sources of information.

- When attempting to answer questions for which you need more information, try to guess and make up things as if you were in a real testing situation. This procedure forces you to take what you already know and to determine what might be the answer, rather than just saying, "I don't know." This approach is known as "B.S.ing" and it often makes the difference between an A and a B! This means writing out an answer which makes sense to you, even though you don't remember exactly what was said in the textbook or lecture. You often know more than you think. An imaginative answer can be a good way to demonstrate your comprehension.
• Once you have completed the test, compare your answers with those that you have in your own set of questions. Use your notes to refine your answers.

• After noting the questions you have answered well and those in need of improvement design a new test. Follow the same procedure that we have outlined in steps 1-7. Take the new test and continue repeating the steps.