

M S T S

# TEST TAKING TIPS

---

IT'S NOT JUST WHAT YOU KNOW, IT'S HOW  
YOU USE WHAT YOU KNOW.

COPYRIGHT © 2003 MSTs  
626 KELLY ROAD  
MAGNOLIA, TX 77354  
TELEPHONE (281) 356-9239



---

## PRE-TEST SUGGESTIONS

---

1. Do not put all your codes in one binder because it will be too thick, usually about 5” thick. Pushing the pages back and forth with a thick binder is difficult and slow. Suggest using 3-4 binders. Don’t use a binder thicker than 1-1/2”. The rings on thicker binders also have a tendency to get misaligned, which increases the difficulty in turning pages.
2. Tab and highlight your codebooks. The **3M Tape Flags** make excellent tabs. The thicker the codebook, the greater the need for tabs. On larger codes you may find it helpful to use a “color-code” system. A sample system for tabs could be:
  - a. White Administration (e.g. Table of Contents, Index, Start of Major Sections)
  - b. Green Formulas
  - c. Yellow Significant Tables
  - d. Orange Significant Text

**Note! Don’t overdo tabs.** If your Codes have so many tabs that they look like porcupine quills, you’ve got way too many tabs. I’ve watched inspectors with “porcupine quilled” Codes spend 5 minutes searching through the myriad of tabs muttering, “I know I have a tab somewhere ...”. Most often they could have found the answer quicker by just using the **Index** or **Table of Contents**.

A general idea on the number of tabs; ASME Section VIII should have about 25-30 tabs, ASME Section IX should have about 10-15 tabs.

3. On tabs, write legibly and use appropriate sized lettering. Using a color system sometimes helps you shorten the tab name. For example in the API 510 class, I’ve seen tabs labeled “*t<sub>minimum</sub> calculation for the shell*”. That’s way too long! By using a color-code system (e.g. green for all calculations) and because there is only one shell calculation, this tab can be easily labeled “**Shell**”. This is much easier to read and find during the test.
4. When marking on the tabs, we suggest using a **Sharpie Permanent Marker**. Pencil and typical pens will smudge. We provide permanent markers and **3M Tape Flags** in class.
5. Additional tabbing suggestions will be provided in class.

---

## AN API EXAM

---

Each API exam is a significant milestone in an inspector’s career. Additional job opportunities and salary increases are possible for the certified inspector. Of course, a good resume with some API certificates opens employment doors, but who you are is what keeps that door open.

---

## THE QUESTIONS

---

All API exams have 150 multiple-choice questions and each question has four possible answers. The exam is divided into 2 parts, the Open-Book and the Closed-Book. The open-book portion of the test is given first (in the morning), is 4 hours in length and has about 50 questions. The closed-book portion is given after lunch, lasts another 4 hours and has about 100 questions.

Most inspectors take 3-4 hours to complete the open-book exam and about 2 hours to complete the closed-book exam. Once the closed-book portion is completed, you head home and wait for the results.

---

## THE TEST

---

During both tests, the inspectors are given a test booklet and a blank answer sheet. When answering a question, the inspector must fill in the correct bubble on the answer key. You remember all the rules – completely fill the bubble, don't fill in more than one bubble for any specific question, use a #2 lead pencil, etc.

The questions for the open-book exam are printed on the right-hand page of the exam booklet. The left-hand page is left blank for your use as scratch paper when doing calculations. You are not allowed to bring in blank paper to do your work. The questions for the closed-book exam are printed on both pages of the exam booklet.

You can mark-up the exam booklets. Your “hen-scratching” will not be graded. They only grade “the bubbles” on the answer sheet.

---

## HOW TO TAKE A TEST

---

Here are six ways to score better on test:

- 1) Plan to study
- 2) Recall ideas
- 3) Be confident
- 4) Read the directions
- 5) Pace the test
- 6) Review your answers

---

**PLAN TO STUDY**

---

**Prepare!** Schedule your study time. Set goals so you complete your studies before the test.

---

**BE CONFIDENT**

---

**They are not trying to trick you!** The more mental energy you use worrying about possible tricks, the less mental energy you have to solve exam questions.

---

**PACE THE EXAM**

---

Don't turn in a test unless (1) time is up or (2) you reviewed your answers. ***Don't change an answer unless you're positive the first answer is wrong.*** If you have done a good job of studying, your first answer is usually correct.

---

**OTHER**

---

Underline or ***highlight*** key words in a test question.

1) How many ***bend test(s)*** are needed to qualifying a weld ***procedure?***

- a. 0
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. 4

Key words: *Bend Test* vs. tension test, *Weld procedure* vs. welder

---

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS

---

### When to Bubble?

For some individuals, it is very distracting to determine the answer to an exam question, and then stop to “bubble-in” the answer on the answer sheet. During the open book test it is especially difficult since it is a juggling act to keep track of the: exam booklet, the Codes, your calculator, a sharp pencil and the answer sheet. There’s just too much stuff and not enough space.

Here is a good solution that will save you time. While working the questions, put the answer key in an “out-of-the-way” place. To keep from “breaking your technical flow” as you solve the questions, simply circle the correct answer in the test booklet. Later, when you need a “change of pace”, go back and fill in the bubbles on the answer sheet. Obviously, don’t wait until the last few minutes of the exam to do this. I would suggest filling in the bubbles about every hour.

When “bubbling-in” the answers, if you have skipped a question in the test booklet, be sure to skip the question on the answer sheet.

Marking the correct answer in the test booklet is valuable for another reason. When finishing the test, be sure to review your answers. This review is so much easier if the answers are already marked in your test booklet.

### How to handle “Stumpers”

How should you handle questions that are stumpers – questions that you don’t know the answer? First, don’t waste large amounts of time on these questions. On the open book portion of the exam, some students will spend ½ hr on each “stumper” and then run out of time and not finish the test. Why waste excessive time on 1 stumper and miss the last 10 questions? Some of these last questions are relatively easy!

Here are some suggestions for handling “stumpers”.

1. Carefully reread the question and highlight (or underline) key words. You will be making sure you understand what is being asked.
2. If you’re still stumped, mark the test question in your test booklet. Make the mark substantial, e.g. circle the question number, put an “X” in the margin, or circle the whole question!
3. Move on to the next test question. Be sure to “pass-up” this question on the answer sheet. Your worst nightmare ... you’re just completing test question 150 but you realize you’ve just “bubbled-in” question 149. You are one question off on the answer sheet. Horrors! (See paragraph “When to Bubble?”)
4. As you work the rest of the exam, your subconscious is working on the “stumpers”. (That’s why it is so important to thoroughly understand the test question.) Often a future question will provide the spark that helps solve the stumpers.

5. Once you have completed the test, go back and spend time on the stumpers. Work to eliminate clearly wrong answers. If you have to guess, your overall score goes up when you eliminate wrong answers. (If you can eliminate 2 wrong answers, you have a 50% chance of selecting the right answer. That's a much better than having to guess from 4 possible answers.)

**Watch out for answers with numbers**

All answers will be numbered rather than alphabetized. At times when your answers are numbers be sure to circle the correct answer in you test booklet, then go bubble its corresponding answer number.

*How many bend tests does it take to qualify a welder in the 1G position.*

- 1 0
- 2 1
- 3 2
- 4 4

*The correct answer is 2, which is answer #3. Don't mark answer #2!*

1 2 3 4

**Exam Checklist - Bring to the Test Site**

- \_\_\_ API Admission Ticket
- \_\_\_ Valid personnel ID
- \_\_\_ Applicable Codes
- \_\_\_ Calculator & backup calculator (non-programmable)
- \_\_\_ Extra pencils
- \_\_\_ Triangle or straight edge
- \_\_\_ Jacket – some classrooms can get uncomfortably cool
- \_\_\_ Earplugs – you never know what group might be next door.