

## Tackling the Test

➤ **Answer the easiest questions first.** By initially getting the questions out of the way that are easiest for you, you accomplish several important things. First, you'll be leaving yourself more time to think about the tougher questions. In addition, moving through a series of questions without a struggle will build your confidence. Finally, working through a number of questions will build up a base of point that may be enough earn you at least a minimally acceptable grade.

➤ **Write legibly and only on one side of the paper.** If an instructor can't read what you've written, you're not going to get credit for it, no matter how brilliant your answer. So be sure to keep your handwriting legible.

It's also a good idea to write your answers to essay questions on only one side of a page. This will allow you to go back later and add or revise information.

➤ **Master machine-scored tests.** Tests will sometimes be scored, in part, by computer. In such cases, you'll usually have to indicate your answers by filling in—with a pencil—circles or squares on a computer answer sheet.

Be careful! A stray mark or smudge can cause the computer scanner to misread your answer sheet, producing errors in grading. Be sure to bring a good eraser in addition to a pencil; the biggest source of mistakes in machine grading is incomplete erasing.

It's best to write your answers not only on the answer sheet, but also on the test itself (if the test is not intended for future reuse.) That way you can go back and check your answers easily—a step you should take frequently. It's also a good idea to match up your answers on the test with the spaces on the answer sheet every five or so items. This will help you make sure you haven't skipped a space or gotten off track on some other way. If you catch such problems early, they're easy to fix.

A variant of machine-scored testing is online testing. In such cases, you'll be taking an exam on a computer outside of class. Although we'll talk more about such tests in Chapter 10, for now keep in mind that you shouldn't wait until just before the final deadline to start your test. Technical difficulties may prevent you from logging in or having enough time to finish. In addition, be sure to have paper and pencil available. Even though you use the computer to record your answers, you'll want to be able to jot down ideas and notes and do calculations the traditional way; using paper and pencil.