NELSON DENNY –DO AND DON’T LIST

Be sure to review the following list of test taking hints at least the day before and the day of your Nelson-Denny Reading Test.

1. Do eat breakfast the day of the test. Eat some carbohydrates as well as protein. Avoid excessive caffeine and sugary, high fat foods. A good breakfast will help your body to work its best on the test.

Do not arrive at the test hungry. Among other things, your stomach’s growling may be disconcerting and embarrassing to you and annoying to others.

2. Do get adequate rest - 7 - 9 hours is recommended for most people. You can achieve more with less fatigue. Rest helps you deal more effectively with stress.

3. Do visit the restroom and get a sip of water before going into the test room.

4. Do not drink too many liquids prior to the test; if you do, you may be physically uncomfortable during the test.

5. Arrive on time— with several minutes to spare.

Do not arrive late to class or to the testing session. You will be nervous. You may have to miss taking the test with your group. You may distract your classmates or the others who are testing. You may cause an unnecessary delay on the teacher’s part in administering the test to your classmates or the group. **DO NOT GO INTO THE CLASSROOM IF TESTING HAS BEGUN.**

6. Do wear comfortable clothes that make you feel good - physically and mentally.

Do not wear tight-fitting clothes. They will be unnecessarily distracting to you and compromise your concentration.

7. Do sit in workable, somewhat comfortable position

Do not feel as if you have to sit erect with both feet on the floor, but avoid getting so comfortable that you may have trouble staying alert, working rapidly, and remaining on tasks.
8. Do ignore other test takers and any other outside distractions.

Do not become disoriented by looking up. It breaks concentration and is an unnecessary expenditure of time.

Do not let outside noises or other possible distractions break your concentration or slow you down. Dig in. Focus harder. Do not stop. Do not look up. Do not react. Concentrate all your attention on the reading material and the questions.

9. Do learn and practice stress relief techniques:
   Deep breathing—take several slow, deep breaths through the nose, hold each a few seconds, and then release each slowly through the mouth
   muscle flexing of the neck and shoulders
   self-talk to remove negative thinking, that inner voice of doubt

10. Do keep the test booklet and scantron sheet in alignment.

Do not mark on your test booklet.

Do not use up more time than necessary when turning the pages of your test booklet to go to next page.

11. Do line up your answer sheet so that you have the shortest distance for your eyes travel from the test booklet to the answer sheet.

Do not lift your test booklet off the flat surface except to turn the page.
Note: If you find that you need to do this, you may consider getting an eye exam

12. Do remember your glasses if you require them. Make sure they are clean.

13. Do not take a dictionary to the Nelson - Denny Test.

14. Do keep your pencil in your hand throughout the testing period. Holding it helps you stay alert and ready to react to what you are reading.

Do keep the pencil in a lowered position, and use it as a placekeeper, resting its point next to the next answer line to be marked with your response.

Do have a couple of extra #2, sharpened pencils out for immediate use in case your first pencil needs to be replaced while you are testing. Make sure that your extra pencils have good, clean erasers.
15. Do quickly - pre-read the questions but not the answer options before beginning the reading of the passages. The questions will help you establish some points of focus and concentration. In this way, you will actually start interacting with the subject matter of the selection before you even begin reading.

DO NOT BEGIN reading the passage before pre-reading the questions for that passage. However, remember that some of the questions will be more helpful than others in helping direct your attention to the reading.

16. Do use your other hand as a reading pacer to guide your eyes through the reading selection. You may want to use your index finger in a zigzag motion to sweep across one line and down and across the next. It helps the eyes to keep moving and your mind to stay focused on the reading.

As much as possible, avoid regression - going back and re-reading what you have just read. If you need a clearer understanding of a particular point in the reading passage, you can scan for it when answering the questions.

Do use the index finger of one hand as needed to help your eyes to scan for information needed to answer your questions.

Do use your hand as a placekeeper to rest next to the question being answered while you are marking your answer on your scantron sheet. Keeping your place in this way will help you save valuable seconds. You will not need to relocate the item you are answering each time with only your eyes.

17. Do keep moving. Spend a reasonable amount of time on each question; mark your answer and MOVE ON!

Do not let certain types of questions take an unreasonable amount of you very limited time. Questions containing the following or similar phrases are time-eaters: eliminators such as –“…all of the following except…,” “which of the following is not…,” etc. Also, beware of items which have a negative in the question as well as in the answer options.

Do not, as a rule, look back more than twice for a single answer. Narrow your Choices down. Make a selection. Mark it and MOVE ON!

Do not skip an answer line on your scantron. You probably will not have time to go back to it. You would, however, run the risk of marking the answer to the next question in that blank area. You can see how costly that error could prove.
18. Do focus only on the reading selection and/or question at hand. Each question has 5 answers (A-E) from which to choose. Make your brain and eyes work together.

Do not continue to think or worry about a previous part of the test. Give your full attention to the passage and the questions on which you are working.

19. Do not allow yourself to drift off task or daydream. Try to block out all preexisting worries and concerns before going into the testing room. Those worries will still be there for you to work on after the test.

20. Do prepare for the Nelson-Denny Reading Diagnostic Test ahead of time. To develop an effective study plan:

A. Contact the Reading Lab instructors or your English 081 instructor to help identify your specific reading needs.

B. Set aside sufficient study and practice time to accomplish your study goals. Remember you are in training for a competition. You need to strengthen your skills and gain confidence in your reading. Regular timed reading practice followed by comprehension questions helps increase tolerance for test anxiety by helping you to improve your ability to react to a difficult timed testing situation.

- Practice on the Speed Reader and the Excel-a-Read computer programs should help you improve your personal rapid reading speed and comprehension.

C. Seek assistance as you encounter obstacles. The reading instructors will probably be able to help you overcome most of these barriers. Small study groups have proven very useful in helping students work on and gain strength in reading skills such as determining the main idea, making inferences, drawing conclusions, and recognizing supporting details.

D. Realize that reaching your goal may take longer than you had hoped or planned. Be committed to your study plan.
Do utilize the Learning Lab and its resources. Some additional materials you may want to look at to help you prepare for your test are listed below:

A. Speed Reader (computer program) - EM selections, similar to newspaper articles in width, can be read more rapidly than the SR selections which have longer lines, similar to textbook lines. SR cannot be read as quickly as EM selections because of the additional eye movement involved. Make sure to practice both types.

B. Excel-a-Read (computer program) – helps the reader to break the regression habit.

C. Diagnostic Reading Test 1 & 2 (computer program) – help the reader to pinpoint his or her reading skill weaknesses.

D. 88 Passages, 100 Passages, and Six-Way Paragraph (books) – provide the reader with book type readings and comprehension questions similar to ones given on the Nelson-Denny Test.

E. RFU cards (Reading for Understanding) – provide the reader with excellent practice in inferential skill building.

F. Reading handouts – provide the reader practice with a variety of reading skills. They are located in the Learning Lab on shelves labeled by the skill area addressed.