General tips for taking math exams

You may find the following bits of advice helpful when taking your exam:

1.) **Be Prepared** – Do all the common sense stuff: Study, come to office hours if you're confused about a topic, review your old homework, get a good night's sleep the night before, eat breakfast, etc. Bring spare pencils and your calculator.

2.) **Don't Panic –** Some of the problems may look difficult or impossible, but in all likelihood they will just be variations of problems that you've seen before, either in your homework, in class, or in the book. Granted, there may be a few twists here and there designed to test your understanding, but nothing will be impossible or outrageous. **Just take a deep breath, try to relax, and approach the problem confidently.** Feeling prepared (see above) will help with this.

3.) **Use your time wisely** – Basically, this boils down to: **do the easy problems first**. Don't waste valuable time struggling with one problem when there are easy points waiting to be scooped up later in the test. When you get the exam, spend a minute looking over the whole thing and pick out the problems you feel totally confident that you can solve. Attack those first before moving on to more challenging or time-consuming problems. Doing the easy problems first will also serve as a warm-up and a confidence boost.

4.) **Pay attention** – Lots of points are lost on exams through sheer carelessness. Don't be careless. Read the question carefully and make sure that you **understand what the problem is asking you to do**. Make sure to pay attention to the form in which the question asks you to express your answer (interval notation, a graph, etc.) Pay attention to your own work, and avoid making silly mistakes. Avoiding silly mistakes is especially important on multiple choice questions, where no partial credit will be given.

5.) **Write clearly and effectively** - Make your answers readable and clearly show your work. I should be able to read your solution and understand exactly what steps you did to solve the problem. For incorrect solutions, your chances of being awarded partial credit will improve vastly if I can see what you did and where things went wrong. If I see a wrong answer surrounded by a bunch of meaningless scribbles, I will not award any partial credit. For word problems, be sure to use the correct units and express your answer in a complete sentence.