A Personal Time Survey

To begin managing your time you first need a clearer idea of how you now use your time. The Personal Time Survey will help you to estimate how much time you currently spend in typical activities. To get a more accurate estimate, you might keep track of how you spend your time for a week. This will help you get a better idea of how much time you need to prepare for each subject. It will also help you identify your time wasters. But for now complete the Personal Time Survey to get an estimate. The following survey shows the amount of time you spend on various activities. When taking the survey, estimate the amount of time spent on each item. Once you have this amount, multiply it by seven. This will give you the total time spent on the activity in one week. After each item’s weekly time has been calculated, add all these times for the grand total. Subtract this from 168, the total possible hours per week.

Here We Go:
1. Number of hours of sleep each night
   ______ X 7 = ______
2. Number of grooming hours per day
   ______ X 7 = ______
3. Number of hours for meals/snacks per day - include preparation time
   ______ X 7 = ______
4a. Total travel time weekdays
   ______ X 5= ______
4b. Total travel time weekends
   ______
5. Number of hours per week for regularly scheduled functions (clubs, church, get-togethers, etc.)
   ______
6. Number of hours per day for chores, errands, extra grooming, etc.
   ______ X 7 = ______
7. Number of hours of work per week
   ______
8. Number of hours in class per week
   ______
9. Number of average hours per week socializing, dates, etc. Be honest!
   ______

Now add up the totals:
_____

Subtract the above number from 168
168 - _____ = ______
The remaining hours are the hours you have allowed yourself to study.
2. Study Hour Formula

To determine how many hours you need to study each week to get A’s, use the following rule of thumb. Study two hours per hour in class for an easy class, three hours per hour in class for an average class, and four hours per hour in class for a difficult class. For example, basket weaving 101 is a relatively easy 3 hour course. Usually, a person would not do more than 6 hours of work outside of class per week. Advanced calculus is usually considered a difficult course, so it might be best to study the proposed 12 hours a week. If more hours are needed, take away some hours from easier courses, i.e., basket weaving. Figure out the time that you need to study by using the above formula for each of your classes.

Easy class credit hours

\[ \text{credit hours} \times 2 = \text{study hours} \]

Average class credit hours

\[ \text{credit hours} \times 3 = \text{study hours} \]

Difficult class credit hours

\[ \text{credit hours} \times 4 = \text{study hours} \]

Total

\[ \text{credit hours} \times \text{hours per credit hour} \]

Compare this number to your time left from the survey. Now is the time when many students might find themselves a bit stressed. Just a note to ease your anxieties. It is not only the quantity of study time but also its quality. This formula is a general guideline. Try it for a week, and make adjustments as needed.

3. Daily Schedules

There are a variety of time schedules that can fit your personality. These include engagement books, a piece of poster board tacked to a wall, or 3 x 5 cards. Once you decide upon the style, the next step is construction. It is best to allow spaces for each hour, half-hours for a busy schedule. First, put down all of the necessities; classes, work, meals, etc. Now block in your study time (remember the study time formula presented earlier). Schedule it for a time when you are energized. Also, it’s best to review class notes soon after class. Make sure to schedule in study breaks, about 10 minutes each hour. Be realistic on how many courses to take. To succeed in your courses you need to have the time to study. If you find you don’t have time to study and you’re not socializing to an extreme, you might want to consider lightening your load. Tips for Saving Time Now that you know how you spend most of your time, take a look at it. Think about what your most important things are. Do you have enough time? Chances are that you do not. Below are some tips on how to schedule and budget your time when it seems you just don’t have enough.

4. Don’t be a perfectionist

Trying to be a perfect person sets you up for defeat. Nobody can be perfect. Difficult tasks usually result in avoidance and procrastination. You need to set achievable goals, but they should also be challenging. There will always be people both weaker and stronger than you.
5. Learn to say no

For example, an acquaintance of yours would like you to see a movie with him tonight. You made social plans for tomorrow with your friends and tonight you were going to study and do laundry. You really are not interested. You want to say no, but you hate turning people down. Politely saying no should become a habit. Saying no frees up time for the things that are most important.

6. Learn to Prioritize

Prioritizing your responsibilities and engagements is very important. Some people do not know how to prioritize and become procrastinators. A "to do list" places items in order of importance. One method is the ABC list. This list is divided into three sections; a, b, or c. The items placed in the A section are those needed to be done that day. The items placed in the B section need completion within the week. The C section items are those things that need to be done within the month. As the B, C items become more pertinent they are bumped up to the A or B list. Try it or come up with your own method, but do it.

7. Combine several activities

Another suggestion is to combine several activities into one time spot. While commuting to school, listen to taped notes. This allows up to an hour or two a day of good study review. While showering make a mental list of the things that need to be done. When you watch a sit-com, laugh as you pay your bills. These are just suggestions of what you can do to combine your time, but there are many others, above all be creative, and let it work for you.

8. Conclusion

After scheduling becomes a habit, then you can adjust it. It’s better to be precise at first. It is easier to find something to do with extra time then to find extra time to do something. Most importantly, make it work for you. A time schedule that is not personalized and honest is not a time schedule at all.

By George Mason University

**Time Management Skills**

Finishing a test on time is difficult for many students. When taking long tests, plan how long you’ll spend on each section before beginning the test. These strategies will help you better manage time:

- Sit where a clock is visible or wear a watch. Make a mental note when you begin, and periodically check the time.
- Briefly review all test sections before beginning, and determine how much time should be devoted to each one. For example, set aside a half hour for each section while taking a two hour test with four sections. However, divvy appropriate time for each section since it takes longer to complete an essay than a multiple choice section.
Develop brief outlines with the arguments you’ll make when answering essay questions.

Don’t waste time dwelling on a single multiple choice question. Answer questions you know first to save time for confusing ones. Students often answer confusing questions correct when they have time to analyze and eliminate incorrect answer choices.

**Test Day Preparations**

Refrain from pulling an all-nighter the night before a test. Being groggy affects concentration. Utilize these tips to adequately prepare for tests:

- Set an alarm or have a friend call you when tests are scheduled during early morning hours.
- Eat protein rich food on test day. Protein is a reliable energy source while sitting and concentrating for extended periods of time. Avoid simple carbohydrates and excessive amounts of caffeine since consuming these substances often lead to energy crashes.
- Shower on test day. Being self-conscious about appearance is a distraction.
- Arrive early for the test. Having extra time will allow you to clear your mind and focus on the test.
- Come prepared to the test with blue books, note paper, pencils, calculators, and other permitted items.
- Briefly review notes just prior to the test. If you’re sufficiently prepared, summarizing notes will refresh what you’ve learned.
- Time permitting, lightly exercise on test day. Exercise is an effective way to manage stress.
- Use the restroom before entering the test center or classroom.

**Relieving Test Taking Anxiety**

It’s normal to feel anxiety on test day. Stress often motives students to study hard, but excessive stress can affect performance. Utilize these strategies to alleviate test taking anxiety:

- Participate in deep breathing exercises before taking the test. Continue doing this if you experience extreme anxiety while taking the test. Deep breathing is an excellent strategy to calm nerves.
- Take some time to stretch prior to sitting down for the test to relieve tension. If permitted or granted a break, stretch your limbs again while taking the test. It’s ineffective to evaluate test preparation during the test. If you don’t perform up to expectations, assess performance and make changes after the test.
- Don’t overreact to a poor test score. Move on since you’ll have opportunities later in the semester to make up for a bad score.
- Meet with the teacher or an academic counselor if test taking anxiety is affecting performance. Counselors can teach you strategies for overcoming anxiety. Some
teachers grant students who struggle with extreme anxiety additional time to finish a test.

Never compare yourself to peers, and don’t get distracted by students who finish early. Devote all your attention to focusing on the test. The best way to decrease test taking anxiety is to study hard for the test. You must make time to study. There is no easy route to success. Even if you’re prepared, it’s still normal to feel nervous. Utilize the aforementioned tips, and you’ll be fine.

**9 Ways to Improve Your Memory**

It’s not unusual to forget unfamiliar and new topics. If you’re trying to learn something new, utilize the following strategies:

1. **Be flexible** – Utilize various learning strategies. Refrain from relying on outdated learning methods and attempt to use more efficient ones.

2. **Overlearn** – To learn something new, you must constantly work on new problems. One successful strategy many students have employed is talking and writing about new concepts they have learned. This is a useful way to instill new information in the brain. Students learning new languages often utilize this strategy.

3. **Schedule** – Plan and set aside time to study. If you don’t have a set time, it’s easy to skip studying. Avoid studying in distracting environments and mimic test day conditions as close as possible.

4. **Rephrase and explain** – Teach the new concept you’ve learned to a peer. Explain the new concept and use examples to illustrate it. Seek constructive criticism from the peer you’re teaching. You’ll have a better understanding of how clearly you comprehend the concept after teaching it.

Students frequently select answers on tests because they have a good feeling about it. Many students have adopted this attitude from years of multiple-choice and true and false testing. As a result, students spend more time looking for answers that seem correct, rather than working through the problem.

Although many instructors assign tests that do not require students to memorize a lot of information, refrain from looking for answers that seem or feel right. After studying, take time to test yourself on the new concepts you’ve learned. If you can adequately explain newly learned concepts, you are well prepared for an exam requiring memory retention.

5. **Eliminate accidental and unrelated associations** – Study in distraction-free settings. Silence your phone when studying and refrain from doing anything that will hinder your train of thought. Do not watch TV or listen to music while studying.

6. **Eliminate previous mistakes** – Learn from past mistakes. Take time to brainstorm these mistakes and develop steps to eliminate them. Research has shown that tracking past mistakes and analyzing what went wrong enables students to perform better on future tests. This is known as negative practice.
7. **Prioritize** – You’ll have to spend more time studying for demanding classes. During lectures, identify the main points teachers are empathizing and spend more time studying these concepts. Develop outlines of key concepts.

8. **Get Emotionally Involved** – Become passionate about what you’re trying to learn. Even if a class is not entirely relevant for your future career, work hard and try to master the course content since you’ll improve your study skills by doing so.

9. **Utilize Mechanical Memory Aids** – If you’re studying complex topics that are hard to learn, utilize mechanical memory aids. For example, if you were learning about specific organ system functions for a human anatomy class, you could list the name of specific organs on one side of a flash card and on the opposite side list a brief summary of the organ’s function. If you struggle remembering the names of the organs, create another set of flash cards with names listed on one side and the first two letters of the word listed on the other.

### General Test Taking Strategies

Students incorporating these strategies will perform better on any test. For best results, apply these strategies in the following order:

**Write Down Everything Your Remember**
Before beginning the test, write down easily forgotten information. This includes formulas, equations, dates, names, and vital data. Likewise, write down brief outlines to refer to during essays, margin notes, mnemonic hints, and other key information that could be forgotten under stress. Frequently refer back to margin notes while completing the test.

**Read the Directions**
Thoroughly read all test instructions. Look for key indicators like except, or, and, most correct, when, etc. Briefly review all the sections, identify if answers can be used multiple times, and pay close attention to each question since some contain multiple correct answers.

Simplify complex instructions by breaking them into sections. Underline or circle confusing questions, and return to them after answering easy ones. Follow instructions precisely since some teachers deduct points for not doing so. If permitted, clarify confusing questions with the teacher.

Also take time to determine how questions are scored before starting the test. For most tests, students are not penalized for incorrectly answering questions, but incorrect answers on standardized and other tests can lower the final score. Pay close attention to word problem instructions since most teachers offer partial credit for showing work.

If permitted, bring a calculator, note paper, and other permitted tools to the testing center. Many students make the mistake of rushing through tests without utilizing permitted test taking tools.
Briefly Look Over The Test
Once you've read the instructions, briefly review the test to identify question quantity and types, such as essays, multiple choice, etc. Make a mental note of the point values corresponding to each section and categorize each one by difficulty to determine how much time should be spent per section since most tests are timed.

Standardized tests are typically timed. As a result, it's important to review these tests before starting them since ineffective time management will result in lower scores. If there is no time limit, take your time answering questions.

Put a Plan Together
Once you've reviewed the test, create a plan to finish it. Set aside enough time for each question, and do not waver from the plan. When taking tests where penalties apply for skipping questions, manage time wisely. While taking untimed tests, spend the majority of the time working on questions with higher-point values. Once you've completed these questions, answer questions with lower-point values.

However, most tests are timed, so focus on simple questions at the beginning to save time for more challenging questions. Don’t spend excessive time on easy questions.

Schedule time to check answers and review for simple errors. Sit near a clock or wear a watch to track time. Use all the allotted time to complete the test.

Read Each Question Carefully
Take time to review sample questions since they might provide insight into how the teacher expects you to answer questions. Work through complex problems by organizing them into shortened sections, and then complete each section separately. Clarify confusing questions with the teacher, and don’t waste time over analyzing questions since most teachers do not purposely try to trick students.

It’s Okay to Make Education Guesses
If you get stumped on a question, underline and return to it later. It’s ineffective to dwell on questions you’re clueless about and spend extra time rereading questions.

When answering confusing multiple choice questions, identify clues that provide answer hints. For example, answers with grammatical errors are more than likely incorrect, so pay attention to verb tenses, subject verb agreement issues, and other problems. If questions are confusingly worded, rephrase questions with simple phrases and words. Likewise, pay close attention to the context of questions to get a better understanding of what the question is asking.

Many multiple choice questions contain two answers that seem correct. When this happens, choose the most obvious option. Make an educated guess if you have no clue which option is correct. There is no harm in guessing when points are not deducted for wrong answers.

Don’t Make Careless Mistakes
Read the instructions for each section again after completing the test to ensure you've accurately followed the instructions. Time permitting, briefly review each question to ensure you're satisfied with your answers and fully answered the questions. You will think more clearly after test-taking anxiety decreases.
If you filled out a scantron sheet, ensure bubbles have been properly filled and every question answered. Double check essay and fill in the blank questions for legibility. Likewise, review each step completed on math problems and recheck calculations. Guess on any blank questions if penalties are not assessed.

**Anticipating Test Content**

Prepare for tests by reviewing study guides created by class instructors. Study guides typically contain main points and suggested readings.

Find out from the teacher what to expect on the exam. Most teachers are willing to tell students the main concepts that will be on the test.

Take copious notes right before the exam. Teachers often give hints days before the test.

Try to figure out possible test questions. Create a list of questions and test yourself on them.

When possible, review previous examinations to get familiar with the format and get an idea of what will be tested.

Put together study groups with other classmates since peers often provide useful insights during study sessions.

Try to determine potential test questions from clues during classroom lectures. Pay close attention if the teacher does the following:
- Writes terms on the whiteboard
- Repeats something
- Poses questions to generate classroom discussions
- Reviews lecture notes
- Notifies the class that a specific topic will be tested

**Essay Tests**

Most college exams contain essay sections. Science and humanities majors are required to take numerous essay tests. Essay questions are used to assess how effectively students recall, analyze, and organize information. Essay questions are typically subjective since questions can be answered multiple ways. However, most professors only give full credit to essay questions if certain topics are addressed. Professors often award students points if answers are supported well, even when key points are missing.

Utilize these tips in the following order to score well on an essay test:

**Preparing Before the Test**

Practice writing essays under timed conditions prior to the exam. Find questions in a work or textbook or create questions. Ask a classmate to create an essay question to practice. Refrain from using textbooks and notes when practicing.
Determine whether your professor, a teacher’s aide, or another person will be grading essay questions, and then determine that individual’s grading criteria. Some professors prefer answers to be supported with facts, while others evaluate the cohesion of students’ arguments. If the teacher’s assistant will grade essays, provide multiple facts to support claims and refrain from making unorthodox arguments.

Read All Directions Carefully Before Answering
Students often miss points on essays because they neglect to follow instructions. Look for the following instructions when reading essay questions:

- Are answers to be provided on notebook paper, a blue book, or the exam?
- Do you have options about how many and what questions to answer?
- Are there a specific amount of topics you must include in answers?
- Are there specific instructions about how essays are to be written? (i.e. double space responses or write at least a page)
- Are dates required within answers?
- Are names of people and places required to be included within responses?
- What types of examples are appropriate for responses?

If you currently don’t understand the following words and phrases, familiarize yourself with them before taking an exam with essay questions:

- antonym
- synonym
- similar to
- none of
- all of
- the same as
- the opposite of
- only one correct choice
- if
- assume that
- all but one

Allocate Your Time Appropriately
Manage time wisely when responding to essay questions. Devote more time to questions with higher point values, but devote the same amount of time to each question when assigned multiple questions of equal point values. Be sure you have enough time before finishing to review answers. Plan to spend some time preparing an outline for each essay question.

Make Sure You Thoroughly Read and Understand Questions Before Answering

Thoroughly read essay instructions before writing responses, especially when there are multiple questions to choose from.

Essay directions provide instructions about whether you’re required to compare and contrast two viewpoints, summarize a series of events, make and support an argument, etc. Divide difficult questions into manageable sections to ensure every part of the question is adequately answered. Write margin notes to remain on task while writing responses. Clarify confusing questions with the professor.

Carefully Examine Instructions for Directional Words
Essay question instructions provide specific directions about how questions are to be answered. Students need to understand what different words and phrases within essay questions mean to adequately respond. The following words and phrases frequently appear in essay instructions:
**Compare and Contrast** – Demonstrate the similarities and differences between two topics

**Analyze** – Provide in-depth analysis about a topic

**Support or Defend** – Take a specific stance and support it with facts or logical arguments

**Critique** – Evaluate a topic from multiple perspectives

**Describe** – Provide multiple facts about a specific topic, event, person, etc.

**Evaluate** – Support an opinion with facts, empirical evidence, logical anecdotes, etc.

**Illustrate** – Provide examples to support a position or answer a question

**Demonstrate** – Provide specific details to show why a particular event occurred

**List or Name** – Provide specific details to show why a particular event occurred

**Prove** – Develop a supported argument to defend a position

**Justify** – Similar to prove, provide facts to support an argument

**Trace** – Provide step-by-step analysis to illustrate factors contributing to an event

**Summarize** – Provide a comprehensive summary of a topic

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**Pick a Title**
Develop a title for every essay response. Titles are useful for staying on topic and avoiding redundancies. Titles should list the topic and your perspective.

**Organize and Outline the Answer**
Students who excel at writing essays typically spend a portion of the essay developing an outline. Develop an outline to organize an essay response and ensure all questions are adequately answered. Students who’ve sufficiently prepared for the test typically do not have to spend a lot of time developing outlines. As a result, they can spend more time writing and refining essay responses.

Before developing the outline, list general points. These points are typically the separate section questions. Underneath or next to each general point, list specific points that will be used to support an argument or answer a question. Attempt to recreate the outline you developed while practicing for the test.

Once you’ve developed the outline, determine the order you’ll address each point in the essay. Essay structure is typically affected by the subject and type of question. Use the following tips to organize your response:

- **Generalized information is funneled to specific details**: Students make generalized arguments that are supported with specific details
- **Chronological list**: Events or steps are presented in chronological order
- **Compare and contrast**: Evaluate a position from multiple perspectives, including the similarities and differences or positive and negative aspects of each position
- In addition to outlines, there are various other ways to organize content. Students often use bubble maps, flow charts, tables, or herringbone maps to organize essays.

**Get Active**
Put a lot of effort into and get excited about the essay. Relate personally to the topic and take time to consider movies or books you enjoy that relate to the topic, even though you will not refer to popular books and movies in your essay.

** Employ Methodical Writing**
Organize your response as you would a 5 paragraph essay. Every response should include a brief introduction, thesis statement, and three body paragraphs (each with topic sentences that effectively identify supporting arguments), and a conclusion.

The thesis statement should identify your argument and supporting points
Subsequent paragraphs should contain effective topic sentences that identify the main point of the paragraph. The remainder of the paragraph should support the topic sentence. In the conclusion, re-summarize your main arguments, but do not add new information. Thoroughly support points with facts and logical arguments. Utilize transitional words and phrases, such as in addition, moreover, although, unlike, etc., to transition to new ideas.

Use multiple examples to support each argument. Avoid 1-2 sentence paragraphs, but do not be too wordy. Write clearly and directly.

**Don’t Waste Space**
Closely follow writing instructions, but if none exist, do not fill up space by using large handwriting. Skip a line between paragraphs, unless instructed otherwise, and if you’re required to write at least a page, be sure to meet minimum space requirements. Some professors might consider a student's efforts to fill space as proof he or she does not understand the material.

**Check and Re-check Your Work**
Give yourself enough time to review essay question responses. Be sure you thoroughly answered the question, presented coherent arguments, and effectively organized the essay. Also check for legibility, proper punctuation and grammar usage, and spelling errors.

**What If You Prepared for Different Questions?**
Students frequently prepare for certain questions, but different questions often show up on the test. If given options, select questions you’re able to thoroughly answer. Identify ambiguities in difficult questions and present logical arguments.

**What To Do If You Run Out of Time**
If you have more questions to answer, and time is an issue, create short outlines with main points that you would use to answer the questions. Write a brief note indicating that time had expired since some professors will award partial credit.

**Strategies for Multiple Choice Exams**

**Getting Ready Before the Exam**
- Review previous test questions while studying. Challenge yourself by working through difficult problems. If you take practice tests, review incorrect answers.
- Don’t focus too much on memorizing facts. Instead, focus on underlying concepts. Test questions are usually worded confusingly.
- In addition to underlying concepts, learn strategies for effective test taking. Even if you understand the concepts, it’s easy to get stumped by tricky wording.
- Make educated guesses about potential test questions.
- At the Beginning
  - Carefully read all test questions and write notes within test margins.
  - Briefly review each test section to determine how much time should be spent on each one.
  - To save time, first answer test questions you know.
  - Reading the Questions
  - Review each question stem slowly to determine what is being asked.
  - Answer the question in your mind prior to looking at answer options.
• After reading the question stem, underline words that provide hints about the correct answer. Since students are usually stressed during tests, it’s helpful to underline text and make notes within test margins
• Pay close attention and underline the following indicators: all, always, never, none, except, and only. These words typically signify a false choice
• If you’re confused after reading a question, read it again
• Don’t over analyze questions
• If permitted, clarify confusing questions with instructors
• Choosing the Best Answer
• Analyze each choice before selecting an answer. Students often make the mistake of choosing one of the first couple of answers without looking at the other options
• Before selecting an answer, eliminate choices that are obviously incorrect
• Be careful when answering questions phrased with the following stem: all of the following statements are false except. Students who miss these types of questions often misread the question stem
• When there is no difference between two choices, each choice is more than likely wrong. However, carefully look for a & d are false or true options
• Pay close attention to similarly worded answer options since they often contain a few different words. In many cases, one of these choices is the correct answer
• Pay close attention to grammatical irregularities in the question stem and answer choices. Compare the stem with answers to determine whether they match
• Do not get sidetracked by the following answer choices: none of the above, both A & D, or all of the above. Eliminate blatantly incorrect choices to narrow options
• Final Suggestions
• Never leave questions you don’t know blank. First, eliminate incorrect choices, and if you are still not sure of the answer, make an educated guess
• Even though some teachers trickily word questions, resist the urge to focus on this. Rather, thoroughly read questions since teachers test students’ critical reasoning skills by using tricky wording
• Pay attention to questions that provide insights into other ones
• Use remaining time after the test is finished to review for simple errors. If the essay contained essays, check for spelling and grammatical errors. However, if you constantly finish before fellow classmates, be sure that you’re thoroughly reading questions and not rushing through the test
• Stick with your original answer unless you have a valid reason to do so. Relying on a gut feeling is a bad reason to switch an answer.

True/False Exams

Teachers use true-false questions to assess students’ understanding of specific topics. There is no ambiguity in these types of questions since only one response is correct.

Read the Questions Carefully

Carefully read the question and underline important phrases and words providing hints about the answer. Separate long or complicated questions into sections and review each section separately. Then identify unrelated words and phrases, and highlight key phrases providing insight into the question.
Look for Clue Words

Questions with because, always, never, only, and all within them are typically false. Questions with often, usually, probably, most, generally, and seldom within them are typically true. Try to identify phrases used in textbooks or lectures within questions. Also, look for similarities in other questions to decipher clues that can be helpful in answering confusing ones.

Don’t Quibble

Many students over analyze true-false questions by looking for hidden meanings. Professors typically do not try to trick students; rather, they’re interested in assessing how well students understand the material. Questions that appear to be true are usually correct. Avoid choosing false simply because there is a grammatical error. If you’re confused about a question, don’t hesitate clarifying it with the professor.

Guess

If you do not know the correct answer, and no penalties are incurred for guessing, make an educated guess. You have a 50 percent chance of correctly answering the question. Pay close attention to the question since if any part of the question is wrong, false is the correct answer. There typically tend to be more true-false questions that are true than false. Try to decipher patterns if multiple questions confuse you. However, you must have gotten a majority of the answers correct for this to be a successful strategy.

Don’t Change Answers

Resist the temptation to change answers unless there is good reason to do so. If you’re unsure about your selections, keep the original answers.

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