Julia's Test-Taking Guide, by Julia Schwartz

Preparation

- Do all of the practice midterms you can. The best thing you can do before a test is just do practice problems, so that you can get used to writing out code, and working under pressure.
- If you completely don't understand some concept, go to the review.
- Practice all the recursive tracing problems you can (handouts, etc.)
- Practice all the inheritance questions you can
  - Get proficient at quickly and accurately writing up your inheritance table so that you can whip it out without thinking on the test.
- Write up a quick notes/reference sheet with a list of common mistakes and pitfalls you might make, as well as various useful methods (like methods from the String class, for example).
- Get a good night's sleep if you can. A fresh head is much more important for this test, as it is open book.
- Try to relax before the test. You will do best if you don't hurry and take your time to think of logical, clear solutions instead of writing whatever first comes to your mind.

During the test

- Try to be as calm as possible. Just think, "okay great here I go to take a test."
- Do the inheritance question first, as it is the most mechanical and will warm you up. Remember to solve it one variable at a time.
- If you don't see a pattern in the recursive tracing problem, just do the small numbers if possible and move on. It's probably not worth spending unduly amounts of time trying to figure out the larger recursive tracing questions.
- If you hit a problem you don't see the answer to within a short while, move on.
- Read the problem carefully and completely before writing code. Sometimes it helps to underline points you think might be important or could forget.
- The first thing you should do when writing a method is to write a method header and take care of all exceptions.
- If you are doing a Linked List problem, don't forget current = current.next!

What to Do if you get Stuck (Partial Credit is a Wonderful Thing)

- Write the method header. This is already an automatic 3 points or so.
- Write out all the exceptions. These are usually easy to write, and are again easy points. You should always handle exceptions first, in case you forget.
- If you think you might need some element (like a variable, or for loop), then write it down. Again, you'll get partial credit.
- If you are stuck, try to relax. If you panic, not only will you think less clearly, but your judgment will also be clouded and you might do something silly like erase everything you've written. Just think to yourself, "Well, this is a tough problem. So, how can I get closer to the solution?"