

Ten Tips for edTPA Candidates

- 1. Read the handbook.** Your subject-specific handbook contains everything you need to know to be successful on the edTPA. While reading 50+ pages of instructions, prompts, and rubrics may seem like a daunting task, the handbooks are organized to tell you exactly what you need to do, exactly what you need to write, and exactly how you will be assessed.
- 2. Read the entire handbook before you begin Task 1.** Even though you are not ready to complete Task 2 or 3, you need to understand what types of questions you will be asked in those tasks and what types of evidence you will need to show before you even begin designing your lesson plans.
- 3. Carefully read the prompts and answer all parts of each question.** This may seem obvious, but you would be surprised how many people do not answer the questions set forth in the prompt. Candidates commonly complain that they feel they are “saying the same things over and over” throughout their commentaries. However, this should not be the case! If you are saying the same thing repeatedly, then you are likely not answering the question being asked as no two questions are the same. Underline the verb in each prompt and make sure you do what it asks you to do. If the prompt asks you to describe something, describe it. If it asks you to justify, then justify. Underline the key terms in each question and use them in your response. For example, if the prompt asks you to describe your students’ prior academic learning, then your response should contain the words “My students’ prior academic learning...” On the other hand, do not add extraneous information that is not asked in the prompt, because you think it is what the reviewers want to hear.
- 4. Practice recording before you teach your learning segment.** Recording yourself teaching can be a nerve-wracking experience. Recording yourself teaching for an assessment that may impact your ability to be licensed as an educator is positively fear inducing. Alleviate any jitters by recording yourself teaching, then watch the videos before its time to do your edTPA. This will also help your students feel more comfortable on edTPA days, as well as eliminate potential technical glitches with the recording process. You can determine the best angle for your camera, so both you and your students can be seen and heard.
- 5. Record every day of your learning segment.** The only constant in teaching is that nothing is ever constant, and nothing ever goes exactly according to plan. Consequently, it is imperative that you record all 3-5 lessons in your learning segment. What you thought might be the best day to record, might turn out to be a day that the students are exhausted. The lesson that you thought might be more teacher-centered than the rest might spark a lively conversation in your classroom. Be prepared for both circumstances by ensuring that you record enough material from which to choose the best clip (or clips) to showcase your classroom environment and instruction.
- 6. Save everything.** If you live in a state where edTPA is consequential for licensure, chances are that if you fail to meet the cut score set by your state, you will have to re-submit your edTPA. If you keep all of your recorded clips, along with copies of extra assessments from your learning segment, you will potentially make the re-submission process much easier for yourself.

- 7. There is no such thing as a “perfect” classroom.** Candidates often feel pressure to show a class where every student is on his or her “best” behavior. Where no one speaks out of turn. Where each student raises his or her hand and is eager to answer the candidate’s questions. If your classroom does not look like this, you can still be successful on the edTPA. Your clips should showcase that you respect your students as individuals and engage them in higher order thinking skills. Sometimes engagement is messy, and that’s okay.
- 8. It’s about the students.** This goes for your writing as well as your instruction. Avoid the temptation to focus your commentary on what you are doing, or should be doing. Instead, put the students at the center of your analysis. As often as possible, the students should be the subject of your sentence. When planning your lessons, center the lessons on the students. They should be doing the majority of the work in your lessons. While it’s perfectly acceptable to have direct instruction in your learning segment, make sure that any direct instruction offers opportunities for the students to engage in the material themselves.
- 9. Complete Task 3 BEFORE you complete Task 2.** Nationally, Task 3 is the lowest performing task. There are any number of explanations for this trend. Keep your brain fresh and ready to tackle this challenging task by completing it before you analyze your recorded clips.
- 10. Remember, it’s just good teaching.** If you have made it to student teaching, you have had ample opportunities to write lesson plans, practice teaching, and analyze assessment data. In your program, you have studied research and theory, and you have seen good teaching modeled. Everything you have done so far has prepared you for success on this assessment. The edTPA is an opportunity for you to showcase all you have learned and what an awesome teacher you are going to be. Use this opportunity to show off your best self. Follow the directions, answer the questions, be specific, and you’ll be just fine.