



Multiple Choice Test Strategies

There are four key principles to successfully completing multiple choice exams:

1. Prepare well enough to know the answer without even looking for it.
2. Use problem-solving strategies to figure out the answers you do not know.
3. Use test-wise clues to improve your ability to select the right answer.
4. If all else fails, use strategic guessing to answer any remaining questions.

Diana Van Blerkom Orientation to College Learning (2004)

When you receive the test booklet, you should immediately do two things:

1. Write down any notes that you want to remember.
2. Skim through the test briefly and read all directions carefully.

Once you begin the exam, be sure to read the questions/statements carefully.

1. Read slowly. The exam is timed, but rushing often leads to misunderstanding.
2. Annotate the test. Underline or circle key words in each question.
3. Be very aware of negatives in questions/statements.
4. Think of the question/statement in your own words.
5. Always read all of the choices, even when you know the answer.

If you are not sure of an answer, use a process of elimination to find the likeliest answer. You should develop your own process of elimination, but here are just a few ideas:

- A process of elimination implies that you are removing incorrect answers from the selection rather than seeking the correct answer.
- Look for key words in the question/statement or other test questions that will help you decide.
- Look for grammatical errors between the question/statement and the answers. Test authors are usually fastidious grammarians.
- Be careful of absolutes, e.g. all, none, always, never, only. They are often, but not always, wrong.
- If a compound answer is available, e.g. all of the above, none of the above, you need to think critically and logically as you proceed through the elimination process.
- A completely unfamiliar term or concept is likely the wrong answer.
- If the answer options include two opposite answers, then one of those answers is likely correct.
- If the answer options include two similar answers, then one of those answers is likely correct.

Once you have completed the exam, read through it carefully once more.

Check to make sure that you answered all of the questions and have no stray marks on your answer sheet.

Only change an answer if you can explain why you are changing an answer.