

Tips on answering multiple choice questions

There are many strategies for maximizing your success on multiple choice exams. The best way to improve your chances, of course, is to study carefully before the exam. There is no good substitute for knowing the right answer. Even a well-prepared student can make silly mistakes on a multiple choice exam, however, or can fall prey to distracters that look very similar to the correct answer.

General Test Taking Strategies

1. Read each question carefully and thoroughly.
2. Before answering, look at all of the answer choices.
3. Pace yourself if the test is timed. At the start, glance through to determine the number of questions on the test.
4. Practice makes perfect: When studying, make good use of any practice exams, past tests, or study guides that are available to you.
5. Take your time if the test is un-timed. It is not a race to the finish!

Answering Options

1. Pick before peeking: Employ a “cover-up” strategy by trying to answer a question before looking at the choices.
2. Treat each answer choice as a true or false response. Select the “most true” answer.
3. Rephrase a question as a statement using each answer in the sentence. Which seems most true?
4. Mark question numbers that you can’t answer and continue working through the test. Save time to return to the skipped questions at the end, even if it is simply to mark a guess.

Eliminating Choices on Difficult Questions

1. When you are unsure of an answer, try to eliminate as many answers as possible. Eliminating one or more choices increases your odds!
2. Identify key words: Circling or underlining key words helps to narrow down the question’s meaning.
3. Use prior knowledge of word prefixes, suffixes, and roots to make intelligent guesses about unknown terms.
4. Beware of the use of negative terms used in answers, such as none, not, and never.
5. Be aware of superlatives in answer choices, such as all, more, always, and only. Superlatives usually indicate an undisputed fact.

Guessing Strategies

1. Try to make an educated guess.
2. Always use the process of elimination as a first step.
3. Use the wording of the question or answer as a clue to eliminate possibilities.
4. Choose the most precise answer.
5. Avoid answers that seem out of context.
6. Choose a numerical answer from the middle of the range, not from either extreme.

Final Test-Taking Advice

1. Be prepared! Study ahead of time and review in advance to avoid last-minute cramming.
2. Keep your mind open as you read test items. A question or answer can trigger your knowledge about another test item.
3. Eat breakfast the day of the test.
4. Get a good night's sleep the night before the test.
5. Be confident to do your best.