

Strategies for Answering Multiple Choice Questions

- Read the directions. Are you being asked to find the best response or a correct response?
- Answer each question in your head first before you look at the possible answers.
- Read the stem and **all** of the choices before selecting your answer.
- If you aren't sure of the correct answer:
 - Eliminate alternatives that are absurd, silly, or obviously incorrect.
 - Cross off answers that are clearly not correct.
 - Make sure the stem and the choice you've chosen agree grammatically.
 - Choose the alternative that is most inclusive.
 - The longest choice is usually correct. It contains elaborations necessary to make it correct.
 - The correct choice will usually contain relative qualifiers such as usually, generally, sometimes, often, etc. These words allow for exceptions.
 - The correct choice will usually not include absolute qualifiers such as always, never, at no time, etc. These words do not allow for exceptions.
 - Be alert for choices that are identical (they are usually both incorrect) or opposite (often one of them will be the correct choice).
 - Be careful when asked which is not true or all of the following apply except. These are asking you to pick an incorrect answer.
- If there is no penalty, guess if you don't know the answer! You have a 20-25% chance of choosing the correct response on most multiple choice questions.

Strategies for Answering True-False Questions

- Read the directions. Are you being asked to answer the question only or to answer the question and correct any false information?
- Note how your responses are to be marked? (T/F, X/O, etc.)
- If any portion of the question is false, the entire question is false.
- Read carefully for names and dates which are similar and could be easily confused.
- If you aren't sure of the correct response, keep the following hints in mind:
 - Longer questions are more likely to be true.
 - Questions containing relative qualifiers (e.g., normally, frequently, most, some, etc.) are likely to be true because they allow for exception.
 - Questions containing absolute qualifiers (e.g., never, always, none, every, etc.) are likely to be false because they do not allow for exception.

- If there is no penalty, guess if you don't know the answer! You have a 50% chance of choosing the correct answer.

Strategies for Answering Matching Questions

- Read the directions. Is each answer used once or more than once?
- Are you being asked to find one response to each question or all correct responses?
- Complete the matches you know first.
- Cross out each answer when you find it, unless you're told you may use each answer more than once.
- Eliminate any items on the answer list that are obviously out of place or absurd.
- Look for any items with similar wording and make special note of the differences between these items.
- Use logic to determine what is being asked for – a person, a place, a date?
- Answer long matching lists in a systematic way.
- If there is no penalty, guess if you don't know the answer!

Strategies for Answering Multiple Choice Questions

- If there is no penalty, guess if you don't know the answer! But be sure your answer sounds plausible.

Strategies for Answering Essay Exam Questions

- Before the test (when studying)
 - Link facts; see how they can be compared, contrasted, time ordered, or described.
- Predict questions from main ideas, headings in texts, and notes.
- During the test
 - Survey the whole test and look at the number of questions, point value, and difficulty of each section. Budget your time.
 - Note key words in the directions (e.g., Answer A or B; A and B; any 2 out of the 4).
 - Be sure you understand what the directions are asking you to do. Be sure you know the meaning of the key words used in instructions. (see below)
 - Answer easiest questions first.
 - Write on only one side of the page. It is easier to read.
 - Leave a page in between questions so you can add or change details later if time permits.
 - Underline key words in questions and note how many parts need to be answered.

- Structure your answer the same as an essay for an English class. Include an introduction, body, and conclusion. Outline your answer by listing your points and the order in which you wish to answer them. This is especially important if time runs out. Your professor can see you knew the material and you may get partial credit.
- Write legibly.
- PROOFREAD!

Key words used in instructions for essay exams

Analyze: Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part. Then give your opinion.

Compare: Explain similarities and differences.

Contrast: Explain differences only.

Criticize or evaluate: Make a judgment about strengths and weaknesses, worth or merit, positive or negative aspects.

Define: Give a precise and accurate meaning.

Describe: Give a mental impression, a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities, and parts.

Discuss or explain: Give reasons, facts, details that show you understand. Argue pros and cons of an issue.

Enumerate or list: State points one by one and briefly explain.

Explain: Make an idea clear by showing logically how a concept is developed. Give reasons for an event.

Illustrate: Explain by using examples.

Interpret: Explain in your own words and discuss significance.

Justify or prove: Construct an argument for or against and support with evidence.

Outline: Describe in general and cover main points.

Relate: Show a connection among ideas.

Summarize: Condense main ideas; state briefly. Include conclusions.

Trace: Describe a series of steps, stages, or events.