

Prepare for Multiple Choice Tests

Multiple choice exams ask you to recognize a correct answer among a set of options that include three or four wrong answers (called distracters). Some consider multiple choice easier because:

- The correct answer is guaranteed to be in the possible responses. You may score with a guess.
- Multiple choice exams tend to emphasize basic definitions or simple comparisons.
- Since multiple choice exams usually contain many more questions than essay exams, each question has a lower point value and thus offers less risk.

However, they can also be very difficult since multiple choice exams:

- Contain many questions and force you to be familiar with a broader range of material than essays.
- Usually expect you to have a greater familiarity with details. You cannot easily "bluff".
- Some high stakes multiple choice questions can be quite complex and will require depth of thought.

Answering Multiple Choice Questions

Read the directions carefully before you begin answering the exam. Scan all questions over quickly to get a sense of the scope of the exam. Allot your time according to the number of questions.

Read each question carefully.

Multiple choice exams also examine your ability to read carefully and thoughtfully, as much as they test your ability to recall and reason. You must answer the question that is being asked.

Start with questions you feel most comfortable answering.

- Cover up the possible responses with a piece of paper or with your hand while you read the stem, or body of the question. Decide what you think the answer is.
- Then uncover the answers and pick the one that matches your answer. Check to be sure that none of the other responses is better.
- Read the stem with each option treating them as a true-false question, and choose the most true.
- If you are unable to make a choice and need to spend more time with the question, or you answered the question but are unsure that you made the correct choice, put a question mark beside that question, and move on to the next.
- Move on and finish all of those questions that you can answer and then to come back later to process the problematic questions.
- Sometimes the answer will occur to you simply because you are more relaxed after having answered other questions.

If you can't decide on a correct answer:

- Absolute words, such as "always" or "never" are less likely to be correct than conditional words like "usually" or "probably." "Funny" or "strange" options are often wrong.
- If you can verify that more than one of the responses are probably correct, then "all of the above" may be a correct response.
- "None of the above" is usually an incorrect response, but this is less reliable than the "all of the above" rule.
- Be very careful of double negatives. Create the equivalent positive statement.
- Eliminate options you know to be incorrect.
- If all else fails...Guess (unless there is a penalty for wrong answers).

Finally: Take the time to check your work before you hand it in.

Adapted from: <http://www.uwec.edu/geography/ivogeler/multiple.htm> & <http://bio150.chass.utoronto.ca/tips/testtips.htm> & <http://www.studygs.net/tsttak3.htm>