

Test Taking Tips

Before the test

1. Get a good night's sleep the evening before the test.
2. Eat a healthy, protein-rich breakfast the morning of your test.
3. Learn how to Relax. For example, take several deep breaths, and let the tension drain from your body. This can help you concentrate better, and get more oxygen to your brain.
4. Arrive at the testing facility at least 15 minutes early so you do not have to rush or worry about time, which can affect stress levels and performance.

Study Tips

1. Brain Foods to help you study:
 - a. Caffeine: Have a little bit of coffee if you don't have problems with caffeine. As little as a half cup has been shown to raise test scores. Don't drink too much to make you jumpy.
 - b. Protein e.g., eggs
 - c. Omega 3 supplements have been shown to improve memory
 - d. Water – your brain works better when hydrated
2. If you are antsy while you study. Keep your hands busy with a pen, e.g., take notes and underline key words etc. Or “play” with a rubber band, stress ball, etc. to keep your hands busy.

During the test

1. Monitor your time. You have 3 hours to take the test consisting of 135 questions. That's over one minute per question. Allow enough time to go over the test to check that all questions have answers, there are no mismarked answers or other simple errors. If you are getting stuck on a question, mark and skip it, then return to it later.
2. Do not second guess yourself or over think an answer. Research shows that your original hunches are usually correct. Only change your answer if you realize you have misread the questions or later remember information that makes your original answer incorrect..
3. Transfer all responses to the answer sheet at the same time, once you have marked all questions on your exam. (If you try to do several things at once, you increase the probability of making a mistake. Saving the relatively mindless job of filling in bubbles until the last step reduces the probability of making silly errors.) .
4. Make 3 "Passes" Through the Test
 - a. Go through the test first and answer all the questions for which the answers come easily. For the questions that seem more difficult, mark the qualifiers and negatives, and eliminate as many options as you can. This will give you a head start for your second pass. You may come across another question that gives you a clue to the one that stumped you.
 - b. On your second pass spend extra time to figure out the "best" of the rest of the answer options.
 - c. On your third pass, take an educated guess at the ones that are still elusive because any answer is better than no answer.
5. Take notes. You can also quickly write down crucial points when you first get the test - the ones that may slip your mind if you wait. Underline words when you read. Cross off incorrect answers. Writing can trigger memory of material. Moving your hand may also shake off the jitters.
6. Avoid careless errors. Mark your answers carefully. Erase any accidental marks completely. Make sure you are placing your answer on the correct number question.
7. Get involved in one question at a time. This kind of focus reduces feelings of anxiety, as you're not anticipating and worrying about the next one.
8. Before turning in the test, take the time to go over the questions and your answers again. Use up the time allowed to find any possible mistakes and correct them.

At each question

1. **Don't let distractors confuse you.** Multiple choice questions usually include a phrase or stem followed by three to five options. The options consist of the correct answer and some distractors which are equally tempting options to select. Tips for not getting confused by distractors:
 - Cover the options, read the stem, and try to answer, then select the option that most closely matches your answer.
 - Read the stem with each option.
 - Treat each option as a true-false question, and choose the "most true".
2. **Choose the Best Response:** Many options in a multiple choice answer may have some truth to them. You want to identify the best response from the good responses. If you have eliminated other answer options and have narrowed it down to two, and both seem true, try to pick the answer option that is in some way better than one that is just good. Trust your instincts. Be sure to reread the stem (or question) over when selecting the best answer.
3. **Read ALL the choices:** The right answer may be the one you keep skipping.
4. **Cross off any obvious incorrect answer** so you're not tempted to go back at the end of the test and change your answer. For example, cross off any answer that doesn't fit grammatically with the question on your multiple choice test.
5. **Trust that the examiners are not to trying to trick you.**
6. **Don't over think.** Don't assume that the questions are more complicated than they are, and think yourself out of the right answer.

Making educated guesses

1. Typically a positive answer choice is more likely to be true than a negative answer choice.
2. "All of the above" is often a correct response. If you can verify that more than one of the other responses is probably correct, then choose "all of the above." But don't assume that "all of the above" is always correct.
3. When one of the answer choices is "all of the above" and one of the statements is unquestionably false, do not choose "all of the above." Conversely, when "none of the above" is an answer choice and one of the statements is unquestionably true do not choose "none of the above."
4. "None of the above" is usually an incorrect response, but this is less reliable than the "all of the above" rule.
5. Generally the answer choice with the most information or the longest response is the correct choice, because the instructor tends to load it with qualifying adjectives or phrases.
6. Examine the answer being considered and determine whether it is only partly true when addressing the question, or if it would only be true under certain circumstances. If this is the case, it is probably not the correct answer.
7. Look for grammatical clues. Although questions follow different format, all must follow the rules of grammar. For example, if the stem ends with the indefinite article "an," for example, then the correct response probably begins with a vowel. You can eliminate answer options that do not make sense grammatically even if they contain correct information.

Consider this example:

The people of Iceland

- a. a country located just outside the Arctic Circle
- b. are the world's most avid readers
- c. claim to be descendants of the Aztecs
- d. the capital, Reykjavik, where arms talks have been held

Answer option (a) is missing the verb, and answer option (d) has no connection to "the people of Iceland." These options can be eliminated, even though both are true, and you are left with options (b) and (c).

8. Look for verbal associations. A response that repeats key words that are in the stem is likely to be correct.
9. If all else fails, choose response (b) or (c). Many instructors subconsciously feel that the correct answer is "hidden" better if it is surrounded by distracters. Response (a) is usually least likely to be the correct one.
10. Be careful not to be trapped by negatives. Negatives can be words like no, not, none and never, or they can be prefixes like il-, as in illogical, un-, as in

uninterested, im- as in impatient. Notice negatives because they can reverse the meaning of a sentence. Double negatives create the equivalent positive statement, the question's meaning should be the same as it was without. When you find negatives in a question, circle them. Try to gain the meaning of the question or statement without the negative. This will help you determine if the answer option is true or false.

11. Pay attention to qualifiers that can alter the meaning of a question or answer. Qualifiers are words that alter a statement. Words like always, most, equal, good, and bad. In a multiple choice test, qualifiers can make an option on a test question be a correct option or an incorrect option. Responses that use absolute words, such as "always" or "never" are less likely to be correct than ones that use conditional words like "usually" or "probably."

For example, the following 2 statements are nearly identical: It often rains in Seattle. It always rains in Seattle. The first statement is true, while the word "always" in the second statement makes it false. Keep careful track of qualifiers by circling one that appears in a test question or in the answer options.

To beat qualifiers you need to know the qualifier families:

- All, most, some, none (no)
- Always, usually, sometimes, never
- Great, much, little, no
- More, equal, less
- Good, bad
- Is, is not

12. "Funny" responses are usually wrong.
13. "Look alike options" probably one is correct; choose the best but eliminate choices that mean basically the same thing, and thus cancel each other out.
14. Echo options: If two options are opposite each other, chances are one of them is correct
15. If two alternatives seem correct, compare them for differences, then refer to the stem to find your best answer

None of these strategies is infallible. A smart instructor will avoid writing questions for which these strategies work, but you can always hope for a lapse of attention.