

Multiple Choice Test Taking Tips

Multiple choice tests aim to test a student's understanding and application of course knowledge. The goal is for the student to choose the "best" or "most correct" answer. This tip sheet is meant to help you approach your multiple choice test with a strategy and focus so you can come to educated conclusions as you work through the test.

Read the directions for the question thoroughly and make sure you understand them.

Directions might ask you to choose a certain number of questions to answer. Don't be afraid to write down, circle, or cross out anything that helps you clarify or understand the directions.

Get it out of your mind and onto paper.

'Brain dumping' can be an effective test-taking strategy for many written assessments. When you first receive the test, use a scrap piece of paper to write down notes to yourself if necessary as you go through the test. Write down any formulas or acronyms you've had to memorize.

Answer the ones you know first.

It can help to build your confidence to go through the entire test and answer the questions you are sure you know first. Make note of any questions that you don't answer right away. Once you've made it through all the questions on the first go around, go back to the start and work through the questions you passed over the first time.

Read each question twice. Look for "tricky" words.

Make sure you understand and process what is being asked. Look for key terms or concepts that help provide context for the question. Multiple choice questions are often written in a specific way to ensure understanding of the material. Look for words like "all," "none," "few," "some," "never," "always," "except," and "not," as they can be clues towards the answer.

Try to answer each question in your head before looking at the answer options.

Once you have understood what the question is asking, think about what the right answer should be, or what it is likely to contain. Use this to consider the available options – do they match with your solution?

Read all of the answers.

To verify that your chosen answer makes the most sense out of the given options, make sure you read each option carefully.

Narrow down the options and work to select the 'best' answer.

If you're sure an answer is wrong, eliminate it. This will help you to narrow down your options. If you're not sure what the right answer is, can you make a case for why one answer might be wrong? Is one answer only right under narrow conditions, or require exceptions or assumptions to be true? Does one of the options more appropriately address the whole question or better fit the context of the question?

Answer every question!

Be mindful of the time – if you start to run out of time, go through and do your best to come to a logical conclusion or 'best guess' on every question. You can't get points for unanswered questions, so do your best to answer every question.