

THE TUTORING CENTER AT CASA

Strategies for Multiple Choice Tests

The Set -Up

On a typical multiple choice test, there will be questions or statements followed by 4 or 5 possible answers. On a good multiple choice test all options will seem like reasonable answers. A closer look will reveal that some options will not work as answers.

1. Focus on the question

It is not uncommon for a student to misunderstand or misread the question and therefore chose an incorrect answer. Make sure that you clearly understand the question, taking into consideration any qualifying words such as *only*, *all*, *always*, *never*, *best*, *most likely*, *suggest*, *specific* which can effect how you answer the question. First, focus on the terminology and think about your knowledge in that area. Second, Look at the qualifying words and think about how they influence the meaning of the question.

Try to answer the question without looking at the answer options. Cover the answer choices so you will not become distracted and answer the question in your own words. Look for the answer that most closely matches your own.

2. Read the options

If you are having trouble understanding the question read the answer options. These may give you clues to the meaning of the question

3. Eliminate bad choices

If you cannot answer the question or none of the options seems appropriate, begin eliminating options that you know to be incorrect. An option that contains absolute words such as *always*, *never*, or *all* is often incorrect. Likewise, answer choices with qualifying words such as *often*, *somewhat*, *most of the time*, *most likely* or *suggest* are likely to be correct.

4. Familiar/unfamiliar

If all of the answer options look familiar to you and you have the choice of “all the above” consider this as the correct answer. Likewise, if none of the answer options look familiar “none of the above” may be the answer.

Be Prepared

The most effective way to be successful on any test is to become comfortable with the material. Attending all lectures, taking notes, completing homework, and allowing plenty of time to study can accomplish this. Make yourself familiar with relevant terminology – it should be on the test.

Test-wise Strategies¹

- The answer with the most specific information is usually correct
- The longest answer is usually correct
- Numerical answers that are in the middle are usually correct
- An answer that is grammatically incorrect is probably wrong
- When 2 answers are the opposites of each other, 1 is probably correct

These strategies do not replace studying, nor do they guarantee success. They should be used to help you convey your knowledge of the subject on a test.

If you are having trouble with the subject material speak with your instructor or consider seeing a tutor at CASA

¹ Von Blerkom, Dianna, *College Study Skills: Becoming a Strategic Learner*, 3rd edition (2000), Wadsworth Publishing, Stamford, CT