



Figure 1 The Writing Center and Academic Resource Center logo

## **TEST TAKING STRATEGIES - MULTIPLE-CHOICE TESTS**

Studying is only one part of getting good results on your exams. Whether you are taking a multiple choice test or essay, you must know some test taking strategies in order to score the highest possible mark.

### **Test Preparation Tips**

- √ You should start preparing for your first test from the first day of class; this includes paying attention during class, taking good notes, studying, doing homework, and reviewing study materials
- √ Plan your time; make certain that you have enough time to study so that you are prepared set for the test.
- √ Attend the review sessions; consider the hints that the instructor may give you about the test. Try to take notes and ask questions about materials you may be confused about.
- √ Ask the instructor to state the areas that will be highlighted on the test.
- √ Make certain you attend the class before the test; it's another key time for the instructor to give out more suggestions or the format of the test.
- √ Review any material from practice tests, homework, sample problems, the textbook, and class notes.
- √ Eat before a test. Having food will give you energy and help your brain to function better and focus. However, avoid heavy foods, which can make you sleepy.
- √ Do not try to stay up all night and study. Get at least 3 hours of sleep before the test (normally 8 hours of sleep a night is recommended; however, if you are short on time, get at least 3 hours so that you will be rested enough to focus during the test).

- √ Put the main ideas, information, and formulas onto a sheet that can be quickly reviewed many times. This makes it easier to hold on to the important concepts that will be on the test.
- √ Show up at least 5 minutes before the test starts. This will allow you time for some last minute review, and it will give you time to relax before the test.
- √ Set your alarm and have a backup alarm set as well.



Figure 2 Cartoon student

### **Test Taking Tips**

- √ Bring at least two pens/pencils with good erasers, a calculator with enough batteries and any other resources that your instructor allows you to.
- √ Bring a watch to the test so that you can have a better track of time.
- √ Keep a positive approach throughout the whole test and try to stay calm. If you start to feel tense, take a few deep breaths to relax.
- √ Keep your eyes on your own paper. You do not want to look like you are cheating and cause trouble for yourself.
- √ When you first receive your test, do a quick scan through the whole test so that you know how to efficiently plan your time.
- √ Do the easiest problems first. Do not stay on a problem that you are stuck on, especially when time is a factor.
- √ Do the problems that have the greatest point values first.
- √ Pace yourself. Do not rush. Read the entire question and take note of the details.
- √ Write legibly. If the instructor is not able to read your handwriting, he/she will most likely mark it wrong.
- √ Always read the whole question carefully. Do not make assumptions about what the question might be. Ask the instructor for more explanation if you do not understand what he/she is asking for on the test.
- √ If you do not know an answer, leave it. Continue with the rest of the test and come back to it later. You may find some information in other parts of the

- test that may help you out with that question.
- √ Do not pay attention to others if they finish before you. Concentrate on the test in front of you.
  - √ If you have extra time left when you are finished, review your test. Make certain that you have completed all the questions. Do not change an answer unless you misread or misunderstood the question because usually the first answer that you put is the correct one. Look out for unnecessary mistakes and proofread your essay and or short answer questions.
  - √ Double check to make sure that you put your first and last name on the test.

### **Post Test Tips**

- √ Review your test when you get it back to make certain there are no grading mistakes.
- √ Make certain that you understand your mistakes. Try to look the answers up, ask a classmate, or ask the instructor if you do not know the answer to a question.
- √ Make sure to take notes on what the instructor wanted for an answer on the questions and problems that you were wrong if the instructor assesses the test in the class.
- √ If you are not pleased with your grade, go to your instructor and see if you can do a make-up exam or any extra credit.
- √ Keep the test as study material for future review and tests.

### **Strategies for Taking Multiple Choice Tests**

A multiple-choice test usually has dozens of questions or items. For each question, you are supposed to choose the best choice among a set of four or five options.

### **General Test Taking Strategies**

- √ Read each question carefully and completely.

- √ Look over all the answer choices before answering.
- √ Pace yourself if the test is timed. At the beginning, scan through to find out the number of questions on the test.
- √ Take your time if the test is not timed.

### **Answering Options**

- √ Try to answer a question before looking at the choices.
- √ Go with your instinct. Most of the time, your instinct will give you the best choice for the answer.
- √ Look at each answer choice as a true or false response. Select the “most true” answer.
- √ Paraphrase the question in other way, such as a statement using each answer in the sentence and decide which seems most true.
- √ Circle or mark the questions that you do not know the answer to and continue working through the test. Save time to go back to the skipped questions at the end and review them, even if it means you have to guess the answer.

### **Eliminating Choices on Difficult Questions**

- √ Try to rule out as many answers as you can when you are not sure about the correct answer.
- √ Use your understanding of word prefixes, suffixes, and roots to make smart guesses about unknown terms.
- √ Look out for the use of negative terms used in answers, such as *none*, *not*, and *never*.
- √ Look out for superlatives in answer choices, such as *all*, *more*, *always*, and *only*.
- √ Superlatives usually indicate a certain fact.

### **Guessing Strategies**

These strategies are most useful when guessing is the best option you have. These strategies can increase chances of getting the right answer but they do not guarantee it.

- √ Always use the method of elimination first.
- √ Choose the most accurate answer.
- √ Stay away from answers that seem out of context.
- √ Choose a numerical answer from the middle of the range, not from either extreme.
- √ Select the most general answer when other choices are specific.  
However, sometimes the more specific answer is a better choice if all the answers are too general.
- √ When other answers are much shorter, pick the longest one.
- √ Select the answer with a *middle value* when other answers are higher or lower.
- √ Don't pick the similar answers.
- √ Select one of two opposite answers.
- √ Select the answer that is grammatically correct. For example, *a* and *an* = singular, *are* = plural.
- √ Select the answer that has the closest meaning to words in the question or statement.
- √ Count the number of blanks in fill-in questions or statements.
- √ Select from among recognizable answers. Stay away from unknown options.
- √ Pick the most reasonable answer to you.
- √ Stay away from answers with absolute terms in them, such as *always*, *never*, *every*, *none*, *all*, *only*.



Figure 3 An hourglass

## EXERCISE

Try to use at least one strategy mentioned in the handout to answer the multiple choice questions below:

1. The word tale is synonymous with:  
A. Lyric

- B. Fable
  - C. Legend
  - D. Both B and C are correct
  - E. None of the above is correct
2. The government department responsible for judicial affairs of government is
- A. The U.S. Department of Justice
  - B. The U.S. Department of Foreign
  - C. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Services
  - D. The U.S. Department of Interior
3. At the present time, there are relatively few women in positions of corporate management. One reason is:
- A. Until 5 years ago, no women had completed a master's degree in business
  - B. Research has proven that women do not possess any skills required for corporate leadership
  - C. Women have no interest in pursuing management careers
  - D. There are general lacks of formal and informal training programs to develop women managers
4. Z. T. Billingsley's novel, *Urban Living* deals with:
- A. Migration to the countryside
  - B. The stresses associated with metropolitan living
  - C. Our natural resource
  - D. Modern business techniques
5. Which of these statements related to Emily Dickinson is correct?
- A. For a part of her life, she was a recluse.
  - B. She always wrote poetry dealing with melancholia
  - C. She never exhibited any talent for poetry other than free verse
  - D. She always dealt with the most trivial themes of existence in her poetry

Write down at least one strategy that helped you with the multiple-choice test above:

**This handout is based on the following text:**

"Test Taking Strategies, Skills, & Techniques." *TestTakingTips.com*.

TestTakingTips.com, n.d. Web. 8 January 2013.

University of Central Florida. "Test Taking Strategies for Multiple Choice Tests." *Student Academic Resource Center*. Student Success Center, n.d. Web. 8 January 2013.

"Strategies for Taking Multiple Choice Tests." *McGraw-Hill Education*. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., n.d. Web. 8 January 2013.

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