

STRATEGIES FOR MULTIPLE CHOICE EXAM QUESTIONS

GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Read the question and all choices before determining the best answer. Many students quickly select an answer without reading all the alternatives.
 - In most multiple-choice tests, you are often asked to select the best answer. Therefore, you may conclude that there is more than one correct answer, but that once choice is the best answer.
- Skip difficult questions at the beginning of the exam.
- Review choices that are very similar. Many students complain that multiple-choice questions are “tricky”, because two items appear to be similar.
 - Try the following strategy: Translate the similar choices into your own words and then analyze how the choices differ.
- Use caution when “all of the above” and “none of the above” are included as choices. Look carefully at each choice. If you can eliminate one choice, you can eliminate “all of the above” as a response.
 - Likewise, if you are certain that one choice is correct, you can eliminate “none of the above” as a response.
- Review difficult questions before you hand in your exam.

LOOK FOR CLUES IN WORDS

- If two answers are opposite, one is probably correct.
 - Example question: What is the name for a 3D shape with 6 sides?
 - Cube
 - Sphere
 - Polygon
 - Dodecahedron
- Noticing that these two answers are opposite helps you narrow down your choices!*
- Answers with the following words are usually incorrect: always, never, all, must.
 - Answers with the following words are usually correct: seldom, generally, tend to, probably, usually.
 - Look for grammatical clues between the question and the choices. For example, the question and the correct answer often have verbs of the same tense and have nouns and verbs that agree.
 - Underline familiar words or phrases from the lecture or textbook.
 - If one answer features more keywords and recognizable phrasing, it’s probably correct.
 - Correct answer choices will rarely have new information included. If new information is included that doesn’t seem to relate to the topic being asked about, then that choice is likely incorrect, even if the rest of the answer is correct.

Sources:

Dembo, M. H., & Seli, H. (2011). *Motivation and learning strategies for college success: a self-management approach*. New York: Routledge.
Shain, D. D. (1995). *Study skills and test-taking strategies for medical students: find and use your personal learning style*. New York: Springer.