

Answering Multiple Choice Questions

- A. Before answering any questions, read the directions thoroughly and carefully. If the directions are not clear, ask the instructor or test proctor for clarification.
- B. Read each question carefully. See if you can predict the answer before looking at the options.
- C. Read ALL of the multiple choice options in their entirety before choosing an answer. Avoid the temptation to mark the first option that looks good (sometimes a "good" option will be listed before the "best" option).
- D. If you cannot select the correct answer after several seconds of thought, cross out any options that you are sure are wrong, put a mark next to the question, and move on to the next question.
- E. The goal is to do all the relatively easy questions first, then come back later to the difficult ones. But don't rush. Be sure to give each question some thought before moving on.
- F. When you have gone through the entire test once, go back to the items you have marked. This time concentrate on eliminating as many options as you can.
- G. Be wary of options that include extreme words, such as "always," "never," "all," "best," "worst," "none." (If you have to guess, it's usually best to eliminate options with extreme words).
- H. Read each option as if it were a true-false question. Cross out all the options that are false.
- I. However, pay close attention to words such as "not" or "except." (e.g., "Which of the following is not true about the Civil War?"). Circle words like "not" and "except" whenever you see them, to make them stand out. (Usually these words are a signal that all of the options are true except one, and your task is to pick out the FALSE option).
- J. If you have no idea what the correct answer is, guess (as long as you are not penalized for guessing). Some tips that may improve your guessing accuracy (however none of these are foolproof, or guaranteed to work) include:
- If two options look similar, except for 1 or 2 words, usually one of these is the correct answer.
 - If two options have the same meaning, usually both are wrong.
 - If two options consist of words that look or sound the same (e.g., "interference" vs. "interferon") one of these is often the correct answer.
 - If the options cover a wide range of numerical values, a value at or near the middle is often a good guess.
 - An option that is longer or more detailed than the other options is often the correct answer.
 - The option "all of the above" is frequently correct.
- K. If time permits, recheck your answers for accuracy before turning in your exam.

Adapted from:

Ellis, D.B. (1991). Becoming a master student, (6th ed.). Rapid City, S.D.: College Survival, Inc.
Pauk, W. (1984). How to study in college, (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.