

# Multiple choice tests

Multiple choice questions usually include a phrase or stem followed by three to five options:

## Test strategies:

- Read the directions carefully  
Know if each question has one or more correct options  
Know if you are penalized for guessing  
Know how much time is allowed (this governs your strategy)
- Preview the test  
Read through the test quickly and answer the easiest questions first  
Mark those you think you know in some way that is appropriate
- Read through the test a second time and answer more difficult questions  
You may pick up cues for answers from the first reading, or become more comfortable in the testing situation
- If time allows, review both questions and answers  
It is possible you misread questions the first time

## Answering options

Improve your odds, think critically:

### Cover the options, read the question, and try to answer

Select the option that most closely matches your answer

### Read the question with each option

Treat each option as a true-false question, and choose the "most true"

## Strategies for answering difficult questions:

1. **Eliminate options you know to be incorrect**  
If allowed, mark words or alternatives in questions that eliminate the option
2. **Give each option of a question the "true-false test:"**  
This may reduce your selection to the best answer
3. **Question options that grammatically don't fit with the question**
4. **Question options that are totally unfamiliar to you**
5. **Question options that contain negative or absolute words.**  
Try substituting a qualified term for the absolute one.  
For example, *frequently* for *always*; or *typical* for *every* to see if you can eliminate an option
6. **"All of the above:"**  
If you know two of three options seem correct, "all of the above" is a strong possibility
7. **Number answers:**  
toss out the high and low and consider the middle range numbers

8. **"Look alike options"**

probably one is correct; choose the best but eliminate choices that mean basically the same thing, and thus cancel each other out

9. **Double negatives:**

Create the equivalent positive statement

10. **Echo options:**

If two options are opposite each other, chances are one of them is correct

11. **Favor options that contain qualifiers**

The result is longer, more inclusive items that better fill the role of the answer

12. **If two alternatives seem correct,**

compare them for differences, then refer to the question to find your best answer

**Guessing:**

- **Always guess when there is no penalty** for guessing or you can eliminate options
- **Don't guess if you are penalized for guessing** and if you have no basis for your choice
- **Use hints from questions you know** to answer questions you do not.
- **Change your first answers** when you are sure of the correction, or other cues in the test cue you to change.

**Remember that you are looking for the best answer**, not only a correct one, and not one which must be true all of the time, in all cases, and without exception.