Test Taking Strategies

Multiple Choice Questions

Below are nine tips for earning better scores.

1. **Evaluate each possible answer in relation to the <u>question or statement</u>** and **NOT** in relation to other answers unless choosing the <u>best answer</u> among several correct ones.

2. If the correct answer isn't obvious, **read the question along with <u>each answer</u>**. It's easier to spot a match this way.

3. **Analyze questions and code answers**.   For example, mark obviously <u>*incorrect*</u> answers with a "**-**" or "**no**" and possibly <u>*correct*</u> answers with a "**+**" or "**poss**" and then choose among the "+" or "poss" options.

1.   If the correct answer to a question is not known, code the question to be considered later (possibly with a large **?** in the margin) and **skip the question for now**.   Look for clues to this answer in later questions and answers. Jot these clues in the margin to use when reconsidering skipped questions.

5. **Before turning in an exam, reread <u>*each*</u> question and answer**. Unless you are ***<u>ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN</u>*** an answer is wrong, ***DO <u>NOT</u> CHANGE IT***. First impressions are more often right than wrong.

6   If you have to guess, **avoid choosing options you never heard of** or **options with absolutes in them** such as always, never, only, none, ever, etc.

7. **Circle "Key Words"**.   "Key words" reveal the subject of a question and what to look for in an answer. Example - **Which is a false statement about Marxism?**

    The "Key Word" **false** tells you to look for a *wrong* answer while the word **nucleolus** tells you the subject to which the false statement relates.

8. Budget time for each question. **Divide the number of minutes available for taking an exam by the number of questions plus one**. This way you'll know approximately how much time to spend on each question and leave time to re-check answers. Allow more time for essay answers.

9. The number one test taking technique is to **_KNOW YOUR FACTS COLD_**. All the test taking techniques in the world won't help much if you don't know your material.

Questions you cannot answer?

- ❖ Translate the questions into your own words
- ❖ Read each option carefully
- ❖ Ask the teacher to explain difficult words
- ❖ Use one of the strategies below
  - o Attack unfamiliar words by sounding them out, breaking them into parts that are familiar to you, by looking at the surrounding words for clues to the meaning of the word.
  - o Use your general knowledge. What do you already know about __?
  - o Anticipate the answer and look for the one most like what you expect. You may not find exactly the choice you are looking for, so be flexible and choose the best option available.
  - o Use logical reasoning. What would happen if__?
  - o Use the process of elimination with multiple choice questions for which more than one option is correct. Use the following
    - ▪ Pick out the options you are sure are correct.
    - ▪ Pick out the options you are sure are incorrect.
    - ▪ Rule out all answers which contain wrong options.
    - ▪ Rule out all answers which omit options you are sure of.
    - ▪ Select the best remaining answer.
  - o If you guess an answer, check your guess against what you already know and against what your logical reasoning tells you.

Guessing

Yes, sometimes a student, no matter how well prepared, is forced to guess the answer to a question. This is usually the cause of much anxiety and can prove to be quite time consuming. Below are eleven techniques for when you just have to take a guess.

1. Choose the _most general_ answer when other choices are specific.

2. Choose the _longest_ answer when others are much shorter.

3. Choose the answer with a _middle value_ when other answers are higher or lower.

4. Choose _neither of the similar_ answers.

5. Choose *one of two opposite* answers.

6. Choose the answer that *agrees grammatically*. For ex: *a*, and *an =* singular, *are* = plural.

7. Choose the answer *most synonymous* with key words in the question or statement.

8. Count the *number of blanks* in fill-in questions or statements.

9. Choose from among *familiar* answers. Avoid unknown options.

10. Choose the *most logical* answer to you.

11. Avoid answers with *absolutes* in them. Examples are *always, never, every, none, all, only*.)