Strategies for Multiple Choice Exams

**Before the Exam:**

Begin studying early. The best way to do well on a multiple choice exam is to know the correct answer.Do not simply memorize material, because instructors will rephrase information in their own words as they write the exams. Make sure you ***understand*** the material.

**During the Exam:**

1. Preview the questions.

2. Estimate how much time you have to answer each question.

3. Read all of the answer choices. Don’t be tempted to mark the first one that sounds good.

4. Answer the easier questions first, and mark the ones you skip. When answering the questions:

* Cover the answers and read the question first. Underline key words, terminology, and qualifiers (“never”, “always”). Think of the correct answer, and circle it if you see it among the answer choices. Then compare your answer with the other choices, to make sure you are right.

-OR-

* Read the stem and each option as though they are true/false questions. Choose the best response.

1. Return to the questions you skipped. Use information and insights you learn as your take the test to go back and fix incorrect answers. You may have picked up cues from the reading or become more comfortable in a test situation.

**If you are unsure of the answer:**

* If there is a question that uses terminology you do not know, use your knowledge of common prefixes to answer it (i.e. hyper means high).
* Avoid options that are totally unfamiliar to you.
* Question options that do not grammatically fit the stem. For example, if it the stem ends with “an”, pick an option that begins with a vowel.
* Remember, your instructor is not trying to trick you. Don’t overthink the answer.

**What tends to be correct?**

* 1. C:\Users\cas-stu\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\LZGGQDX4\MC900434713[1].wmf “All of the above” tends to be correct more often than not, especially if two of the three options are correct.
  2. Conservative statements that use qualifiers (“may sometimes be” or “can occasionally result in”) are right more often than not.
  3. “Look alike options” – probably one is correct. Choose the best response.
  4. “Echo options”- if two options are opposite of each other, chances are one of them is correct.
  5. Options **B** or **C**. Studies show these answers tend to be correct more often than not.

**What tends to be incorrect?**

* 1. “None of the Above” tends to be incorrect, although this is less reliable than the “All of the Above” rule.
  2. Watch out for statements that include absolutes such as “never”, “always”, “is”, “are”, “guarantees” and “ensures”. These types of statements are very restrictive and often difficult to defend.
  3. Extra-long and statements full of jargon are usually used as decoys- watch out!
  4. Second guessing yourself. Studies show that when students change their answer, they are more likely to get the answer wrong.

If you still do not know the answer, make an educated guess (so long as incorrect answers do not result in a deduction of points). However, you should narrow down your choices and carefully review the stem and alternatives before guessing.

**After the Exam:**

C:\Users\cas-stu\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\B2ELLPWR\MC900281970[1].wmf If time allows, review your questions and answers, making sure you did not misread any questions.

Sources: Academictips.org; Uic.edu; Uwec.edu