

Types of Test Questions

Multiple Choice

1. Make certain you read the directions and mark the answers according to the directions. The directions may tell you there is more than one right answer or to skip questions you're not sure of, or only do 5 out of 10. If you don't follow the directions accurately, you may lose valuable points for no good reason.
 2. Look over the entire test quickly. Plan time accordingly.
 3. If you get stuck on a question, mark it, and skip it for now. Struggling to answer a question you are unsure of wastes time and increases stress. Do all the questions you know first, then come back to the others later. Also, some other question may trigger an answer to the earlier one.
 4. Read every word of each question. 60% of all test question errors come from misreading the question or not reading it thoroughly.
 5. Read the stem and think what the answer might be before you look at the choices. This prevents you from grabbing the first answer that even remotely looks correct.
 6. Use key words to help you determine an answer. Watch for words like, "*first, main, most important, only, etc.*"
 7. Use the process of elimination. Ignore silly options. Watch for grammatical give-aways: *The best fruit in an...* (answer has to start with a vowel).
 8. Watch out for "*not, never.*" These words will indicate that you are looking for an answer that is basically incorrect: *Which of these procedures would never be used with a comatose patient?*
 9. Seriously consider the longest answer as the correct one; it often is.
 10. If you're using a scantron, check periodically to be sure you're still on the correct number.
 11. Don't go back and change answers unless you read the question incorrectly. Most of the time doing this will result in an incorrect final answer.
 12. If you have absolutely no idea what the answer could possibly be, pick "C"!
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True/False

1. Follow directions and mark your answer sheet the way the directions tell you to mark it. Just because it is a true-false test doesn't necessarily mean you use the symbols "T" and "F". On a scantron, T and F are usually A and B.
2. Remember that everything has to be true if a statement is to be marked true. But only one word has to be false to make the statement false.
3. Find out whether you will lose points if you guess. Some instructors consider wrong only those answers that you actually mark incorrectly, others consider every unanswered question wrong.
4. Read each question carefully, looking for words that tend to make statements false. The words listed below don't always make a true-false statement false, but they should alert you to think carefully.
 - All: "It was necessary for all of the states to ratify the Constitution before it went into effect."
 - Always: "In modern history, depressions have always followed wars."
 - Never: "Slaves in America, though bitterly resentful, never openly rebelled."
 - None: "None of the Tudor kings was a Roman Catholic."
 - No: "France offered no resistance to Hitler's invasion."
 - Only: "In 1900, Britain and Germany were the only industrial states in the world."
5. Read each question carefully, looking for words that tend to make statements true, such as the following:
 - Some: "Some colonists remained British subjects in preference to declaring independence."
 - Sometimes: "Revolution sometimes results in tyranny."
 - Usually: "Periods of prosperity usually produce great art."
 - Most: "Most of the voting population in 1936 approved of the New Deal."

A word of caution, however. Instructors are aware of the power of these words, too. The only real way to be certain that the words are being used correctly is to know the answer to the question!

Matching Tests

1. Read the directions carefully. Look at the following examples and notice the difference in directions.
 - a. Match the items in Column 1 with those in Column 2. You may use the items in Column 1 more than once.
 - b. Match the items in Column 1 with those in Column 2. You may not use the items in Column 1 more than once.
 2. As you match each item, mark off the ones that you use if you are not allowed to use them twice.
 3. Match the ones you are sure of first. Then go through the process of eliminating the ones you think might belong together.
 4. Don't waste time figuring out questions whose answers you don't know until you have answered all the questions you are certain you know.
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Essay Exams

Strategies:

- Strategy 1 Read the directions. The instructor may weight different questions differently or may not require you to answer all of them.
- Strategy 2 If you don't have to answer all of them, pick the ones you can answer the best.
- Strategy 3 Answer the question being asked. You won't get any points for writing what you know if it doesn't answer the question being asked.
- Strategy 4 Budget your time before beginning to work on any of the questions. Answer the questions with the most weight first.
- Strategy 5 Read the question thoroughly, checking how many parts to the question there really are. (EX: "Contrast good and bad listening habits and explain methods that may be used to improve listening.")
Number the parts of the question, underline key words, circle any words in the question you'll want to use in your answer.
- Strategy 6 Jot down anything you thought of when you read the question, so you don't forget it.
- Strategy 7 Make a short, quick outline of the answer, so that it will be organized and logical for the reader, and you won't miss any points you wanted to include. Watch the sequence in your answer if sequencing is important.
- Strategy 8 Restate the question as the first line of your answer. Avoid any other introduction; just get to the point!

- Strategy 9 Put your strongest points first. Support each of your points. Give examples, if appropriate.
- Strategy 10 Don't change points of view, opinion, or organization midstream.
- Strategy 11 Don't give your opinion unless the question asks for it.
- Strategy 12 Use one paragraph for each point. This is not a research paper. The paragraphs are used to visually help the reader follow your answer.
- Strategy 13 Save the flowery speeches for research papers or compositions. Tell what you know, short and sweet. The instructor has to read many papers and will not appreciate wading through lengthy answers to see if you really knew the answer.
- Strategy 14 Use key words and transition words.
- Strategy 15 Find out (before the test) if spelling counts.
- Strategy 16 If you're running out of time, jot down points in an outline. Often the instructor will give you some credit.
- Strategy 17 Write legibly. Essay tests are often graded subjectively and if handwriting is difficult to read, the instructor may just give fewer points.
- Strategy 18 Reread under your breath. Check for grammar, logic, and that all points are covered.

Key words in essay questions

When preparing to write essays, you must understand what the essay question is really asking by focusing on the *direction* words.

Here is a list of the possible words and what they mean and what is then expected from you.

1. Words asking you to state everything you know about this question:

Describe

Give an account of; tell about; give a word picture of.

ex: Describe an ancient feudal castle.

Discuss

Talk over; consider from various points of view; present the different sides of.

ex: Discuss the contribution of jazz to modern music.

Review

Examine a subject critically, analyzing and commenting on the important statements to be made about it.

ex: Review the economic conditions in South America before 1500.

State

Present the main points in brief, clear sequence, usually omitting details, illustrations, or examples.

ex: State the advantages of owning a 35mm camera.

Explain

Make clear; interpret; tell "how" to do.

ex: Explain how tape recorders reproduce sound.

2. Words asking for main ideas:

Enumerate

Give the points concisely one by one.

ex: Enumerate the causes of World War I.

List

Write an itemized series of concise statements.

ex: List the main parts of a microscope.

Outline

Organize a description under main points and subordinate points omitting minor details.

ex: Outline the main points that determined the outcome of the Civil War.

Summarize

Give the main facts in condensed form.

ex: Summarize the duties of a dietary therapist in a general hospital.

Trace

Describe the progress, development, or events from some point of origin.

ex: Trace the history of music since Pales Trina.

Analyze

Discuss the whole in terms of its parts.

ex: Show how the relationships between the parts of a personality make a whole.

3. Words asking for specific characteristics or certain limited facts:

Compare

Bring out the points of similarity and the points of difference.

ex: Compare English and American Universities.

Contrast

Bring out the points of difference.

ex: Contrast the books Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

Define

Give the meaning of a work or concept; place it in the class to which it belong and set it off from other items in the same class.

ex: Define the word "Democrat."

Diagram

Give a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic answer.

ex: Diagram the growth of Liberia's economic growth during the 20th century.

Illustrate

Use a figure, picture, or diagram to clarify a problem.

ex: Illustrate the movement of the Huns through Europe.

Relate

Show how things are connected or correlated with another.

ex: Relate the playing of hand ball and squash.

Interpret

Translate; give examples of; comment on a subject.

ex: Interpret the following symbols: D.S., D.C.

4. Words asking for your supported opinion:

Criticize

State your opinion of the correctness or merits of an item or issue. Criticism may approve or disapprove.

ex: Criticize the American judicial system.

Evaluate

Give the good and bad points; give an opinion regarding the value of; discuss the advantages and disadvantages.

ex: Evaluate the contribution of radio to mass communication.

Justify

Prove or give reasons for decisions or conclusions.

ex. Justify the building of the Panama Canal.

Prove

Establish that something is true by citing factual evidence or giving clear, logical reasons.

ex: Prove that the lever is the most efficient machine.

Math Word Problems

1. Read the problem until you understand what is being asked.
2. Determine what is given and what is needed.
3. Ignore irrelevant information.
4. Translate the problem from words into symbols. Write the numbers or symbols above the words in the actual problem.
5. Draw pictures or diagrams or set up a table if needed.
6. Now set up the math equation.
7. Solve, using the formula applicable.
8. Put your answer back into the story problem to see if it makes sense.
9. Use the correct measurement in your answer, if called for: \$, sq. ft, cm, mph, yrs.
10. Watch out for totally illogical answers, like negative money.