

Multiple Choice Tests

Advice from an experienced test-taker

These tips and tricks will not work for everyone and will not work without adequate preparation! That means minimum 5+ revisions of the same material. However – if you are preparing thoroughly for tests but your results do not match your effort, these tips may help get you a better grade.

General rules for answering MC questions

1. **Read the question carefully, then read it again... and then again.**
 - Identify the keywords and **form an answer in your head before looking at the answer choices**. **Carefully reading the question will actually save you time** since your decision-making process will be faster.
2. **Work by the process of elimination.**
 - **Find the answers that are definitely (or probably) incorrect first**, then decide between the “maybe” and the “probably” correct remaining answers.
3. **Think of the reasons for why each of your “maybe”s answers the question.**
 - This will usually reveal the reason one of them is not the correct answer
 - If you are struggling between 3-4 correct choices, re-read the question before coming up with reasons for each.
4. **Pick an answer and stick with it!** If you have gone through steps 1-3 you have done everything you can to pick the correct answer and last minute re-thinking won't help!

Common traps and how to escape

“I run out of time!”

- The general “rule” for making (and answering) multiple choice questions is 0.5- 1 minute per question. If you have spent more than 2 minutes on a question put a star beside the question and only come back to it if you have time! If you run out of time, guess!

“How do I remember all these details?”

- Unfortunately, there isn't much of a trick for this one except to increase the number of revisions and make summary notes, key word lists and practice filling out diagrams
- Use as many tools as are available to you. The more ways you are able to remember the information, the more ready you will be for different types of questions

“I always pick the answer that was close to the right answer”

- These answer choices are called “distractor” choices! Make sure you know why you are picking each of your answers (#3 above). There is always a reason the “distractor” answer is incorrect.

The “All of the above” trap

- If there is an “all of the above” choice, even if you have sorted out your “definitely not” answers from your “maybe”s figure out how each of the answer choices addresses the question. If any of the answers do not address the question, “all of the above” doesn't work!

The compulsive answer checker

- Checking your answers too many times can cause you to second guess yourself, eliminating all the careful work you put into answering the question the first time.
- If you find yourself changing a lot of answers while checking over your test, you should either do more of #1 from above (reading the question carefully) or just stop checking your answers! Only check them to make sure you are filling in the correct bubble on the bubble sheet.