

TEST TAKING STRATEGIES: Multiple-Choice Questions

5 golden rules to remember for multiple-choice tests:

1. **Read the question carefully**—Read the question carefully and as if it were just a regular question. What would your answer be? Once you have decided on the answer, look at the options given.
2. **Selecting the right option**—
 - Choose the option that best matches with the answer that you decided for that question.
 - However, make sure that you go through *all* the answer choices, even if one of the choices immediately appears to be the “correct” choice. You never know, there might be a subtle difference in two choices, and although the choice you selected answers the question correctly in terms of one possible aspect of the answer, the other choice might be more *inclusive* of all possible parts of the answer. So probably that choice might be a *better* choice than the one you originally thought. Also, it is quite possible that say option ‘a’ might be a *part* of the answer, option ‘c’ might be another part, but option ‘d’ might look something like this—“both a and c”. In that case, instead of ‘a’ or ‘c’, ‘d’ would be the better answer choice.
 - *Deliberate* for a bit on the answer choices. Some answers might look correct on the first glance, but the instructor might have camouflaged some subtle details or inaccuracies to test your attention to detail and analytical skills. So maybe what seems right at first instinct may not actually be correct. However, *too much* deliberation could also be suicidal. Sometimes, you might be so intent on looking for tricks that you reject your initial instincts on a particular question, and those instincts might be correct! So deliberation on a moderate level is required.
3. **Eliminating certain choices**—Elimination is better than pure guessing. Say you are not sure about the answer for a question with 4 choices. Before you randomly start guessing about the choice that “looks” right, first try to *eliminate* the obviously wrong or incorrect choices. Even if you are able to eliminate say 2 such choices, you have increased the probability of your getting the correct answer from 1 out of 4 (25%) from random guessing, to 2 out of 4 (50%) by eliminating. Now, you might apply some guesswork, but smart guessing, between the 2 choices left. Say, for instance, you might select the answer which has some shred of information more relevant in the context of the question than the other answer choice.
4. **“When in doubt, toss it out!”**—When you have very strong doubts about your first choice of answer, feel free to toss it out and mark the choice you feel is more appropriate. When you have such strong doubts, your second answer is more likely to be correct.
5. **Manage your time**—Time is almost always tight in multiple-choice tests, so always remember: skip questions you are not certain about. Go through the test answering the questions you know. Then, in whatever time is left, go back to the questions skipped. You don’t want to run out of time before you have answered the “cinch” questions!