

Tips for taking Multiple Choice Exams

Taking the Test

Before:

- 1) Be prepared emotionally, physically, as well as intellectually.
- 2) Focus on what you know rather than what you do not know!!

During:

- 1) Read the directions carefully! Ask the instructor to clarify areas that confuse you.
- 2) Plan your time. Leave time at the end to review.
- 3) Read the questions as is. Answer the question the professor intended, interpret the test within the scope of the course.
- 4) Questions on Multiple Choice Exams are often made up of two parts:
 - a. The Stem- the statement or question.
 - i. Read the stem as if it were an independent, free-standing statement.
 - ii. Anticipate the phrase that would complete the thought, and then compare each answer to your anticipated answer.
 - iii. It is important to read each choice, even if the first choice matches the answer you expected, because there may be a better answer listed.
 - b. The Choices- also known as the distracters.
 - i. There are usually 3 to 5 options that will complete the stem statement or question.
 - ii. You are to select the correct choice, the option that completes the thought expressed in the stem.
 - iii. Reasoning ability is a very important skill for doing well on multiple choice exams.
 - iv. Use hints from questions you know to answer questions you do not. Try to relate each answer to the stem to evaluate which one logically completes the thought

Test Taking Strategies to Consider:

- 1) Choose the best available answer- the perfect answer might not be given.
- 2) Eliminate answers which are obviously incorrect. Doing so will help you focus on reasonable answers.
- 3) Mark key words in every question.
 - a. Identify important information in lengthy question stems.
 - b. Look for terms such as not, but, except because they change the meaning of a question.
 - c. Examine items that seem very similar. Try to paraphrase them and analyze their differences.
- 4) Avoid choosing answers that have complicated, unfamiliar words. Chances are that, if you studied, you would recognize them.
- 5) Do not panic if you see a question you did not anticipate. Use everything you know to analyze the question and create a logical answer.
- 6) If you go blank and can't think of anything to write, go on to another question or another part of the test.

After the Test Analysis

Examine and Evaluate the Exam:

- 1) Look for the origin of the question – test, notes, labs, supplementary reading, etc.
- 2) Identify the reason you missed questions. Look at the questions you missed and figure out why the correct answer was better than your answer.
- 3) Check the level of difficulty, or the level of detail of the test questions. Did the test require you to:
 - a. Recall specific terms, facts, names, and other key words; become proficient in the language of the course?
 - b. Distinguish the ways in which ideas, facts, theories, or other observations differ from each other and categorize ideas, facts, and theories according to ways these are similar?
 - c. Answer the questions and solve problems in the text and create your own questions or problems?
 - d. Were most of the questions over precise details, or were they over main ideas and principles?
 - e. Did most of the questions come straight from the material covered or did the professor expect you to be able to analyze and/or evaluate the information?

Reviewing for Future Exams:

- 1) Did you have any problems with anxiety or blocking during the exam? Proper nutrition, exercise, and rest can help you deal with test-related stresses.
- 2) Were there any areas for which you failed to prepare? Create a plan to address your test preparation strategies.
- 3) Did you really know the answer to a question but failed to read it carefully enough to recognize its purpose? Practice reading the returned test carefully and consider similar ways in which you might be tested over new material.
- 4) Did you review the material consistently or did you cram? Research indicates that regular review enhances memory and that the amount of time spent studying correlates with performance of tests. Perhaps commit to a more active study strategy.