

Sharpen Your Test Taking Skills

Learn how to handle general test questions, multiple choice, true or false, and essay questions.

Multiple Choice

- When two choices are opposites, pick one of those two as the best guess.
- “Zero” and “None of the above” are usually poor guesses.
- If a few questions have five possible choices instead of four, pick number five.
- If a question asks for a plural or singular answer, make sure you pick a plural or singular answer.
- Try saying the question and answer to yourself. If it sounds wrong grammatically or sounds silly, it’s probably wrong.
- Read a test question and think of your own answer first, then look for it in the example given. If your answer is not in the example, read the question again and substitute each different answer.
- Try to eliminate all but two answers, and you will have a true or false test. Be cautious about changing your original answer without good reason.
- Some questions may have a best answer and not necessarily a correct answer. If this is the case, work toward selecting the best answer from those which are available.



True or False

- When limiting words are used (all, never, always, must), false is usually the best answer.
- When general words are used (most, some, usually, could, might), true is usually the best answer
- Exaggerated or complex answers are generally false.
- Watch for use of names, dates, places, or other details which could make a statement inaccurate.
- Look for multiple ideas or concepts within the statement. All segments of the questions must be true for the entire question to be true.
- Answer every question. Identify those you’re not sure of with a mark, and review those on a second pass.



Essay Questions & Important Words

- Make a rough outline of your answer before you start to write. Make sure it includes a thesis statement, main points, and proof or examples.
- Avoid wordy introductions. Get down to business and work toward earning the most points in the shortest amount of time.
- Say as much as you can, use short paragraphs, and write legibly.
- If you have ten minutes to answer the question, know how many paragraphs you can write in ten minutes.
- Decide what kind of answer the question requires. See the lists of verbs to the right. These words appear frequently in essay questions. Be familiar with their meanings so that you may answer appropriately.

Verbs Asking for Everything:

- **Comment:** Explain, illustrate, or criticize the meaning or significance of a subject.
- **Describe:** Give a detailed/graphic account.
- **Discuss:** Investigate a subject by argument (pros and cons).
- **Relate:** Show the connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.
- **Review:** Survey and examine critically a subject through either summary, analysis, or criticism.
- **State:** Describe in precise terms a subject or to reproduce a definition exactly.

Verbs Asking for Main Points:


- **Analyze:** Break the subject up into the main ideas.
- **Enumerate or List:** Present a list of the main ideas.
- **Outline:** Summarize in a series of headings and subheadings (theme, main ideas, supporting subordinate ideas).
- **Summarize:** Make a brief, concise account of the main ideas of a theme, concept, principle, development or procedure, omitting details and examples.
- **Trace:** Follow the development or history of your subject from the point of its origin.

Final Words of Wisdom

Read over the whole test before you begin.
Consider the total time allowed and pace yourself.
Don’t agonize over any one question.
Be sure you are following directions correctly.
If using an answer sheet, make sure you’re on the right space.
Go back and review if you have time.

Good luck!

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