

Faculty of Community Services

Academic Support & Resource Centre

Tips for Writing Multiple Choice Exams

General Strategies:

1. Read the general directions carefully. The directions will likely ask you to choose the most correct or the best answer.
2. Look at the total number of questions and the time limit; determine how much time you should spend on each question.
3. Start from the first question and work your way through, question by question. Check your watch regularly. The first time through, don't spend a long time on difficult questions.

Determining the correct alternative:

1. Read the stem first and find the main idea or key terms that you must understand to answer the question.
2. Try to simplify the question by turning it into a statement that the options complete.
3. Watch for *not* and *except* in the stem. Try rephrasing the question so that you take out *not* or *except*. Then mark all the options you are confident are true. The option left will be the answer to the original question. If you're left with more than one alternative, leave the question and return to it later.
4. Try to think of the answer before you read the choices, but don't panic if you can't come up with the answer immediately.
5. Look for the correct option systematically. Cover all options except A. Read A and put a tick (right), a cross (wrong), or a question mark (questionable) beside it. Do the same with each of the remaining options until you have answered the question.
6. Read all the alternatives before you pick one. Remember that you are looking for the most correct or best answer.
7. Sometimes "none of the above" or "all of the above" is the correct answer. BUT don't choose "all/none of the above" unless all/none of the alternatives apply totally to the stem.
8. Alternatives that contain absolute terms such as *all*, *always*, *every*, *never* and *none* are more than likely incorrect. Alternatives that contain qualifying words such as *few*, *least likely*, *most likely*, *may*, *many*, *more*, *most*, *often*, *seldom*, *some*, and *usually* are more than likely correct.
9. In questions with combinations of choices, focus on each choice first. Decide if each is true or false. If one is false, the combination is not the correct alternative.
10. Once you have eliminated all wrong alternatives, you may be left with two alternatives that seem correct. Look for what is different in the key words or phrases in each choice.