

Tips for Different Kinds of Tests

Skills Enhancement & Tutoring Center

True/False:

- **Every part of a true sentence must be "true"**
If any one part of the sentence is false, the whole sentence is false despite many other true statements.
- **Pay close attention to** negatives, qualifiers, absolutes, and long strings of statements
- **Negatives can be confusing**
If the question contains negatives such as "no, not, cannot," drop the negative and read what remains. Decide whether that sentence is true or false. If it is true, its opposite, or negative, is usually false.
- **Qualifiers are words that restrict or open up general statements**
Words like "sometimes, often, frequently, ordinarily, generally" open up the possibilities of making accurate statements. They make more modest claims, are more likely to reflect reality, and usually indicate "true" answers.
- **Absolute words restrict possibilities.**
"No, never, none, always, every, entirely, only" imply the statement must be true 100% of the time and usually indicate "false" answers.
- **Long sentences often include** groups of words set off by punctuation. Pay attention to the "truth" of each of these phrases. If one is false, it usually indicates a false answer.

Multiple Choice:

Multiple choice questions usually include a phrase or stem followed by three to five options:

- Read the directions carefully
- Know if each question has one or more correct options
- Know if you are penalized for guessing
- Answer easy questions first
- **Cover the options, read the stem, and try to answer**
Select the option that most closely matches your answer
- **Read the stem with each option**
Treat each option as a true-false question, and choose the "most true."
- **Strategies to answer difficult questions:**
 - **Eliminate options you know to be incorrect**
 - **Question options that grammatically don't fit with the stem**
 - **Question options that are totally unfamiliar to you**
 - **Question options that contain negative or absolute words.**
Try substituting a qualified term for the absolute one, like *frequently* for *always* or *typical* for *every* to see if you can eliminate it
 - **"All of the above":** If you know two of three options seem correct, "all of the above" is a strong possibility
 - **Number answers:** Toss out the high and low and consider the middle range numbers
 - **"Look alike options":** Probably one is correct; choose the best but eliminate choices that mean basically the same thing and thus cancel each other out
 - **Echo options:** If two options are opposite each other, chances are one of them is correct

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- **Favor options that contain qualifiers:** The result is longer, more inclusive items that better fill the role of the answer
- **If two alternatives seem correct,** compare them for differences then refer to the stem to find your best answer

Essay Exams:

Before writing out the exam: Set up a time schedule to answer each question and to review/edit all questions

- If six questions are to be answered in sixty minutes, allow yourself only seven minutes for each
- If questions are "weighted," prioritize that into your time allocation for each question
- When the time is up for one question, stop writing, leave space, and begin the next question. The incomplete answers can be completed during the review time
- Six incomplete answers will usually receive more credit than three complete ones

Read through the questions once and note if you have any choice in answering questions

- Pay attention to how the question is phrased and to words such as "compare," "contrast," "criticize," etc.
- **Write down their key words,** listings, etc., as they are fresh in your mind. Otherwise, these ideas may be blocked (or be unavailable) when the time comes to write the later questions. This will reduce "clutching" or panic (anxiety and fear which disrupt thoughts).

Before attempting to answer a question, put it in your own words

- Now compare your version with the original. Do they mean the same thing? If they don't, you've misread the question. You'll be surprised how often they don't agree.

Think before you write: Make a brief outline for each question. Number the items in the order you will discuss them

- **Get right to the point:** State your main point in the first sentence
Use your first paragraph to provide an overview of your essay
Use the rest of your essay to discuss these points in more detail
Back up your points with specific information, examples, or quotations from your readings
- **Begin with a strong first sentence** that states the main idea of your essay.
Continue this first paragraph by presenting key points
- **Begin each paragraph** with a key point from the introduction
- **Develop each point** in a complete paragraph
- **Use transitions,** or enumerate, to connect your points
- **Hold to your time** -- allocation and organization

Summarize in your last paragraph: Restate your central idea and indicate why it is important.

Review and complete questions left incomplete but allow time to review all questions

Review, edit, correct misspellings, incomplete words and sentences, miswritten dates and numbers

Not enough time? Outline your answers

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Figuring it out together

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