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For the Classroom

## Test Taking Skills: Multiple Choices

### Discussion Questions

- What do you do in a situation of being stuck on a multiple choice question while taking a test?
- How do you work through the problem?
- Do you ever feel like giving up?

## Activity: Answering Multiple Choice Questions in Five (Not So Easy) Steps

Students will enhance test taking skills by reviewing a five-step strategies for answering multiple choice questions.

### MATERIALS

Copies of Multiple Choice Test Taking Tips handout

### PROCEDURE

1. Explain to students that today they are going to learn a technique that will help them work through strategies to answer multiple choice questions. It is called the process of elimination.
2. Write the following data on the board and explain to them what it means as you are writing it.
  - By taking a random guess on a multiple choice question with 4 possible answers, you have a 25% chance of getting the correct answer.
  - If you eliminate one of the four answers, you have a 33% chance of getting the correct answer.
  - If you eliminate two of the four answers, you have a 50% chance of getting the correct answer.
  - If you can eliminate three of the four answers, you got the question correct!
3. Next, remind students that multiple choice questions may seem easier, because the answer is on the page (somewhere!), but that they can be tricky if you don't have an

approach in place. Review with your students the following five-step approach to answering multiple choice questions:

Step One: Read the question.

Step Two: Cover the choices and formulate your own answer.

Step Three: Read each choice, and evaluate against your formulated answer.

Step Four: Read the question and optional answers as if reading as a true/false question. If your choice makes the statement false, cross it out. If two or more choices seem correct, find the differences between them. Re-evaluate the differences as they relate to the question, and decide which choice is better.

Step Five: Remember to check to make sure your selected answer would be true if rephrased as a true-false question.

4. Write on the board a multiple choice question (select from the following or a question from a recent exam) to demonstrate the above process.

## Sample Multiple Choice Questions:

**Which statement is an opinion rather than a fact?**

- 1. Penalties for crimes vary from state to state.
- 2. Most European nations no longer use capital punishment.
- 3. Most murders in the United States occur within families or among acquaintances.
- 4. Executions are a major deterrent to violent crime. (Correct answer.)

**Which statement best summarizes economic conditions in the United States since the end of World War II?**

- 1. The economy has been in a depression for most of the period.
- 2. The United States has had the world's highest unemployment rate.
- 3. The United States has come to depend more heavily on imports to meet its economic needs. (Correct answer.)
- 4. The legal minimum wage has steadily declined.

**Which trend has reflected the increasing pluralism in United States society in recent years?**

- 1. a decrease in immigration from Latin America
- 2. growing demands for unskilled labor
- 3. new efforts by public schools to teach about ethnic heritages (Correct answer.)
- 4. failure of Congress to approve appointments of women and minority groups to Federal courts

Source: <http://regentsprep.org/Regents/core/questions/answer.cfm>

## Multiple Choice Test Taking Tips

- Read the question before you look at the answer.
- Come up with the answer in your head before looking at the possible answers, this way the choices given on the test won't throw you off or trick you.
- Read all the choices before choosing your answer. Eliminate answers you know aren't right.
- If there is no guessing penalty, always take an educated guess and select an answer.
- Don't keep on changing your answer, usually your first choice is the right one, unless you misread the question.
- In "All of the above" and "None of the above" choices, if you are certain one of the statements is true don't choose "None of the above" or one of the statements are false don't choose "All of the above".
- In a question with an "All of the above" choice, if you see that at least two correct statements, then "All of the above" is probably the answer.
- A positive choice is more likely to be true than a negative one.
- Usually the correct answer is the choice with the most information.
- Responses that use absolute words, such as "always" or "never" are less likely to be correct than ones that use conditional words like "usually" or "probably."
- "Funny" responses are usually wrong.
- "All of the above" is often a correct response. If you can verify that more than one of the other responses is probably correct, then choose "all of the above."
- "None of the above" is usually an incorrect response, but this is less reliable than the "all of the above" rule. Be very careful not to be trapped by double negatives.
- Look for grammatical clues. If the stem ends with the indefinite article "an," for example, then the correct response probably begins with a vowel.
- Look for verbal associations. A response that repeats key words that are in the stem is likely to be correct
- If all else fails, choose response (b) or (c). Many instructors subconsciously feel that the correct answer is "hidden" better if it is surrounded by distracters. Response (a) is usually least likely to be the correct one.

**Source:** *Center for Teaching Excellence*