

Objective Tests

College-level objective tests require you to apply what you know. So this means you should concentrate on selecting the **best** answer from your choices, rather than simply recognizing the **correct** answer. Doing well on these objective tests also requires that you interpret **the test maker's intentions**.

PREPARING FOR OBJECTIVE TESTS

1. Review notes and reading. List the major themes and concepts.
2. Highlight those topics the instructor emphasized, and note why they were emphasized.
3. Concentrate on vocabulary. Identify terms or words used to represent specific concepts and treat them as you would a foreign language. Make flash cards for frequent drills.
4. Compare and contrast. Construct diagrams, charts, tables or lists to summarize relationships.
5. Recite for precision. Use odd moments, in addition to 15-20 minute review sessions, to say or write out complete ideas and facts.

TAKING OBJECTIVE TESTS

1. Plan your time. Allow more time for high point value questions, and reserve time at the end to review your work and to fix any emergencies.
2. Ask your instructor whether or not you can write on the test.
3. Before you begin the test, turn it over and jot down all the facts you must remember.
4. Review the entire test, skimming the questions and developing a general plan for your work.
5. Read each question carefully. Look for time limits, specific instructions (i.e. answer 3 out of the 4 questions below), and how questions will be graded.
6. Start with the section of the test that will yield the most points, but begin working with the easiest questions to save time for the more difficult ones and to warm up.
7. Work quickly, check your time regularly, and adjust your speed if necessary. Don't get stuck on one question at the cost of omitting another one.
8. Avoid reading too much into the question. When you find yourself thinking something like, "This is easy; there must be a trick," mark the question and move on to another. Interpret the questions literally.
9. Always try to choose the answer you think the test maker intended. In other words, stay within the scope of the course.
10. Mark key words in every question. To find key words, ask yourself **what, who, where, when, and how**.

ANALYZING RETURNED OBJECTIVE TESTS

1. Read all comments and suggestions.
2. Look for the origin of the questions. Did they come from class notes or reading? From class or lab?
3. Look at the questions you missed. Try to figure out why the correct answer was better than your answer.
4. Did you really know the answer to a question, but failed to read it carefully enough to recognize it?
5. Were there any areas of the test you failed to prepare for? If so, why?
6. Did you misread any questions?
7. Check the level of difficulty, or the level of detail of the test questions. Did most of the questions concern precise details, or were they about main ideas and principles? Did most of the questions come straight from the material covered or did the test maker expect you to be able to analyze the information?
8. Were you able to finish the test within the time given?
9. Did you have difficulty because were too anxious to focus on the question?

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Test Taking Strategies

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Multiple-choice questions are the most common type of objective question, and consist of two parts: 1) the stem (the statement or question) and 2) the choices (or the distracters.)

Your task is to select the choice that **best completes** the thought expressed in the stem. Though multiple-choice questions typically test your memory of details, facts, and relationships, they also test your level of comprehension and ability to solve problems. Reasoning ability is also a very important skill.

- Read the stem as an independent statement. Cover the choices, and anticipate how you would complete the thought expressed. Then evaluate each choice against your anticipated answer. Be sure to read each choice, even if the first choice matches your answer, because there may be a **better** answer.
- Read the stem and the choice together, as though you were reading a true-false question. If the choice makes the statement false, cross it out. Check all the choices that make the statement true, then choose the best one.
- Beware of words like **not, but, except**. Mark these words because they specify the direction and limits of the answer.
- Also watch out for words like **always, never, only**. Interpret them literally.
- If two or more choices seem correct, compare them to each other and figure out the **differences** between them. Then relate the differences to the stem and decide which choice is the better one. Hint: Select the option that gives the most complete information.
- Use hints from question you know to answer questions you don't know.
- If you don't find an answer, relate each answer to the stem and decide which one logically completes the thought.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Test makers typically focus on **details** in true-false questions.

- In order for a statement to be true, it must be true 100% of the time. This applies to each part of the question.
- Beware of words that qualify and give specific meanings. Words like **some, usually, not** frequently denote true statements, but be careful to read each statement individually.
- Words such as **always** and **never** do not have exceptions. If you can think of an exception, the statement is false.
- Test makers often mismatch items or names with inappropriate events or definitions to test your mastery or attention to detail.

MATCHING QUESTIONS

Matching questions give you some room for guessing. You must know the information well, because you'll have to establish relationships.

- Relationships are essential in sets of matching items. Usually, the relationship is common to all included items.
- For every match you make, cross out the items in **both** columns, unless there's more than one match possible.
- Begin with the longer column containing the information, and look for a match in the column with shorter descriptions. This way you'll spend less time re-reading long statements.