

Writing Objective Tests

Objective tests have only one right answer and the wording of the question is intended to provide you with key information to help you retrieve the answer from your long-term memory. Regardless of what kind of test you are asked to do, there are a few general strategies that you can always try to help you be a successful test-taker:

- Think positively. Take a deep breath before you begin and remain calm.
- Carefully read the directions before you start.
- Manage your time. Figure out how many questions there are and how much time you have to complete the exam and plan your time appropriately.
- Answer the questions you know first, then go back and answer the others.
- If marks are not taken off for incorrect answers, be sure to answer every question even if you are only guessing.

Multiple Choice

There are several components to a multiple-choice question. First, there is the stem of the question. The stem typically provides you with a question to be answered or a statement to be completed. Then, there are several options or alternatives for you to choose from. The following steps have been adapted from Fleet, Goodchild and Zajachowski (2006), and can help you systematically answer multiple choice questions:

- 1) Cover up the possible answers and just read the stem of the question. You can use a scrap piece of paper to cover up the answers, which will also give you space to write down notes about the stem, such as key content words.
- 2) Read to really understand the meaning of the question. Underline, circle or highlight key words in the question. Watch out for words like “always” “never” and “only”. These words can significantly alter the meaning of a question. You can rephrase the question to ensure that you really understand what you are being asked. Try writing it down in your own words on your scrap piece of paper. Ask yourself: “What is this question really asking?”
- 3) Predict an answer before looking at the possible options. This can keep you from being confused by similar answers. If you can’t predict an answer to the question, try thinking about what you remember about the key concept(s) in the question.
- 4) Read through each possible answer, and cross off answers that you know are incorrect.
- 5) Identify the correct answer and circle it. If you are stuck between two answers, reread the stem of the question to see if you missed any important information. After you reread the stem, consider the remaining options again.

True or False

A true or false question consists of a single statement of information. Your job is to determine if it is true or not. Here are some tips for true or false questions:

- Watch out for words like “always,” “never,” “no,” and “not” as they can drastically change the meaning of the question.

- Remember that each part of the statement must be true in order for the whole statement to be true. Be sure to check that every fact is true before deciding on your answer. If any part of the statement is false, the answer is false.

Matching

There are two components to a matching question: the questions and the answer possibilities. Your job is to match each answer to its question. Sometimes, each answer possibility has a match. However, there may be instances where there are more answers than questions, making the task slightly more difficult. Here are some strategies for matching questions:

- Pair up the options that you are sure of first, then pair up the options that are not as clear to you.
- Not all matching tests have an equal number of choices in each column. Be aware of extra options.

Fill in the Blank

Sentence completion questions consist of a statement with an incomplete section of information. However, unlike matching questions, these fill-in-the-blank questions have no options for you to choose from. Your job is to figure out the correct word or phrase to fill in the blank. Here are some strategies for fill-in-the-blank questions:

- Read the statement to yourself and fill in the word that fits best.
- If multiple answers come to mind, write them both lightly in the margin, move on, and then come back to the question later.

References

Fleet, J., Goodchild, F., & Zajchowski, R. (2006). *Learning for Success: Effective Strategies For Students* (4th ed.). Toronto, ON: Nelson.

Pauk, W. (2001.) *How to Study in College* (7th ed.). Boston MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.