

Mastering Multiple-Choice Exams

To master multiple choice questions, understand how professors create them.

- First, they select an important concept to test your understanding
- Next, they generate the correct answer
- Finally, they generate **distractors** to test **how well** you understand concept
 - Distractors are choices that can look, sound or mean about the same thing as the correct answer, but are incorrect because they are either:
 - Too specific (include extreme modifiers such as always, never)
 - Too general (they leave out a piece, make answer vague)

<p>Try these strategies when faced with multiple choice exams:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cover up the answer and read only the stem (the question or statement). Underline or circle key words. 2. Analyze the stem, noting how the meaning changes with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualifiers (i.e. usually, sometimes) Modifiers (i.e. always, never) Negatives (i.e. not, none, un__, dis__, etc.) 3. Try to answer the question before reading choices 4. Identify and eliminate distractors to help narrow your choices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note similar answers Note grammatically incorrect choices Can an answer be correct with extreme modifiers (i.e. always, never)? 5. Re-read remaining choices as true/false statements 6. Stuck? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scan test questions for clues and information that might help Make notes in the margin to help you recall content <p>If all else fails, guess!</p>	<p>Sample:</p> <p>The following questions stem has a qualifier that suggests one choice is the best answer among several plausible alternatives.</p> <p>What is chiefly responsible for the increase in the average length of life in the USA during the last fifty years?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Compulsory health and physical education courses in public schools. (Distractor) b. **The reduced death rate among infants and young children. **(Correct Answer) c. The safety movement, which has greatly reduced the number of deaths from accidents. (Distractor) d. The substitution of machines for human labor. (Distractor) <p>From: How to Better Prepare Multiple Choice Test Items: Guidelines for University Faculty</p>
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