

MULTIPLE CHOICE EXAMS

1. Think you know everything about multiple choice exams? Take our quiz and find out! Try to pick the right answer before reading the solution, and then read the explanations for more information. Need help? Come to the Student Success Centre or make an appointment for Academic Skills Coaching.

Which of the following choices is true about multiple choice exams?

- (a) They test reading comprehension
- (b) Questions can be solved using logic
- (c) Answers rely on memorization and recognition
- (d) It is possible to get 100%
- (e) b & c
- (f) a, b & d
- (g) all of the above
- (h) none of the above

Answer: (f)

The good news: you can use your knowledge, problem-solving skills, and brain power (or luck) to ace multiple choice exams. The bad news? Doing so will require much more than just memorization and recognition. Multiple choice exams can be tricky, but with effective study strategies, lots of preparation, and the ability to solve problems using reason and logic, you won't have many problems.

2. For many reasons, students commonly consider multiple choice exams to be easier than essay exams. Perhaps the most obvious reason is that:

- (a) The correct answer is guaranteed to be among the possible responses
- (b) The sky is blue
- (c) The tests are written on recycled paper
- (d) Easy professors write multiple choice exams

Answer: (a)

This is the best thing about multiple choice questions: the correct answer must be there. Whether you are certain of the right answer or not, you know one of the answers must be correct and you can use logic, reasoning, and knowledge to figure it out.

3. Multiple choice tests also examine your ability to read carefully and thoughtfully, as much as they test your ability to recall and reason. Why?

- (a) You never need to study beforehand
- (b) You can always find the answer somewhere on the page

- (c) All multiple choice tests have a pattern
- (d) Identifying key words can help answer the question

Answer: (d)

While (b) is also true, (d) is the most correct answer. Reading questions and choices carefully and thinking about the words and phrases used can help you choose the right answer, while avoiding careless mistakes and misunderstandings. Underline or highlight to key words to identify exactly what you're being asked, and watch for small but important words, like not, never, except, or unless.

4. Which of the following is true about multiple choice exams?
- (a) You just need to memorize facts and definitions
 - (b) You'll recognize the right answer when you see it
 - (c) The longest answer is always the right one
 - (d) None of the above

Answer: (d)

None of these choices are true! While (a), (b) and (c) are common misconceptions about multiple choice exams, you will need to study actively and thoroughly in order to do well, especially on application and evaluation questions. While occasionally you will recognize the right answer when you see it, you will probably need to think more about the question before you make your final decision.

5. Some students find it helpful to read the question and try to recall the answer from memory before looking at each of the choices. What is McMaster University's mascot?
- (a) Eagle
 - (b) Monster
 - (c) Marauder
 - (d) Falcon

Answer: (c)

Before you looked at the choices, did you picture McMaster's mascot? Your first thought might have been an eagle – but who you pictured was actually Mac the Marauder, an answer that might have been more obvious after you had looked at the choices. Answering this question also requires a bit of background knowledge.

6. Why should you read each of the responses and not just stop when you come upon the one that seems likely?
- (a) Reading each answer helps the cognitive processes in the brain reject the void options
 - (b) The stimulus presented illustrates the best option in the allotted choices
 - (c) Because you shouldn't be impressed by fancy terms that seem like they could answer the question
 - (d) The legitimacy of an answer is dictated by its length in words

Answer: (c)

Don't let fancy words distract you! Just as you shouldn't assume the longest answer is the right one, you also shouldn't be confused or impressed by big words or elegant phrases. Read each choice carefully, and choose the best one (not the fanciest).

7. When you have to complete a sentence, see if one of the answers fits better grammatically than the others. Consider this: a dog is an
- (a) machine
 - (b) animal
 - (c) mammal
 - (d) vegetable

Answer: (b)

While a dog most certainly is a mammal, that choice doesn't fit grammatically with the first part of the sentence. Pay attention to grammar and other word clues when choosing your answer.

8. Since there is only one correct answer to a question, that answer has to be different from the other answers. So, if you see two or three answers that all mean the same thing, they must be the wrong answers. For example, which of the following does not belong:
- (a) Boy
 - (b) Girl
 - (c) Son
 - (d) Lad

Answer: (b)

The easiest thing to do when comparing responses is to quickly create a table of similarities and differences. Break down each choice into its smaller components and then compare the choices. One choice (or more) will not fit in. Of these choices, (b) didn't quite fit with the others.

9. When studying for multiple choice exams, it is important to:
- (a) consider different types of questions you could be asked, such as recognition, synthesis, analysis, application, etc.
 - (b) compare and contrast similarities and differences between theories, concepts, and ideas
 - (c) study the same way you would study for short answer exams
 - (d) consider groups of facts or facts that are similar in meaning
 - (e) test yourself and explain concepts in your own words
 - (f) all of the above

Answer: (f)

All of these choices are great strategies! Remember, when studying for multiple choice exams you should do more than memorize and hope to recognize the right answer. Think critically, dig deep, and truly understand the material!

10. When the exam is over and you've received your grade, you should:
- (a) Forget all about the exam and move on
 - (b) Complain to the professor that your grade isn't high enough
 - (c) Rip up the exam and/or burn it
 - (d) Review your results, see where you went wrong, and use it to improve

Answer: (d)

The temptation after an exam is usually to destroy it. But remember that exams are learning tools that help you identify what you know, what you don't know, and on what skills you can improve. Aren't multiple choice exams great? You can get lucky on them, ace them, and even learn from them.

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