

# **TEST-TAKING TIPS FOR MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS**

by Mary Applegate (updated fall 2015)

# WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO STUDY FOR MOST COLLEGE TESTS?

As you're studying, predict the questions that will be on the test. Then design your own test with those questions (study partners).

# GENERAL TIPS

- 1.) Study each day as you move through the material rather than cramming.
- 2.) Be positive. Think of your test as a challenge, not as something you dread.
- 3.) In the exam room, arrive on time and sit where YOU are most comfortable.
- 4.) Don't worry about when other students hand in their tests. Take as much time as you are allowed.
- 5.) Don't leave multiple choice test questions blank (unless you will be penalized for answering them incorrectly).
- 6.) Don't change answers unless you are absolutely sure your first answer is incorrect.

# **EXCLUDING CHOICES**

**If you don't recognize the words in a choice, that choice is probably incorrect; exclude it.**

# EXAMPLE OF EXCLUDING CHOICES

Assume that you have been studying English grammar. Which one of the following terms is NOT a part of speech?

- a.) Appositive
- b.) Verb
- c.) Case
- d.) Tense

# QUALIFYING WORDS

Pay attention to qualifying words because they can change the meaning of the sentence, making an otherwise true statement false.

Example of qualifying words:

-always

-never

-any

-every

-not

# SAMPLE QUESTION WITH A QUALIFYING WORD

You are trained in first aid and are out for a walk. You see a house on fire. Only one man is there and his chest is burned. You are the only person on the scene. After you call 9-1-1, you should never

- a.) examine the wound
- b.) treat the wound with first aid
- c.) take his shirt off
- d.) get involved at all

# **CHOOSING BETWEEN TWO CLOSE CHOICES**

**Think carefully about the  
difference between these choices,  
and then make your decision.**

# EXAMPLE OF CHOOSING BETWEEN TWO DIFFICULT CHOICES

The best way to study for an anatomy exam which will test your knowledge of the name and location of each bone in the hand is to

- a.) Examine a picture of the hand and say aloud the names of each bone many times.
- b.) read the names of the bones many times until you have thoroughly memorized each one.
- c.) Go to the lab where there is a model of a hand, point to each bone, and say it aloud many times.
- d.) Draw a picture of the hand while labeling each bone many times.

**BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE  
QUESTION.**

**Ask the instructor to rephrase. The  
worst he/she can say is “Sorry, I can’t.”**

# EXAMPLE OF A QUESTION YOU MAY NOT UNDERSTAND

Which one of the following actions is an obsequious person with a dependent personality likely to perform?

- a.) She ignores you when you say hello.
- b.) He rushes to open the door for you even when his hands are full of books.
- c.) She rolls her eyes every time you try on a dress while shopping.
- d.) He looks away whenever you talk about anything that's important to you.

**ANSWER A MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION  
WITH A TRUE-FALSE APPROACH.**

**Answer each choice as True or  
False, and then select the choice  
you answered as “True.”**

## EXAMPLE OF A MC QUESTION ANSWERED USING A TRUE-FALSE APPROACH

The best way to become a semi-professional singer is to

- a.) Study music and take lessons
- b.) Go to college and major in music
- c.) Practice playing music and imitating other singers
- d.) Take singing lessons and practice singing in front of others

**WHEN REASONABLE, TRY TO INITIALLY  
FIGURE OUT THE ANSWER TO THE  
QUESTION BEFORE READING THE CHOICES**

This will force your brain to think  
of the correct answer without  
getting confused by too many  
options.

## EXAMPLE OF INITIALLY COVERING THE CHOICES TO FIGURE OUT THE ANSWER

You have a slight allergy to cats and you are not on prescription medication for it. However, you have decided to visit a friend in her home which contains cats. What should you do to minimize your discomfort?

- a.) Take an aspirin when you arrive
- b.) Take an antihistamine before you arrive
- c.) Take cough syrup the night before
- d.) Take Tamiflu after you leave

**PRACTICE ANSWERING A FEW  
MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS  
USING THE STRATEGIES YOU'VE  
JUST LEARNED**

# ELIMINATE THE OBVIOUSLY INCORRECT CHOICES.

A client with a history of alcohol abuse has been admitted to a rehabilitation unit. The nurse knows that the client is denying alcohol abuse when he makes which one of the following statements?

- a.) “My brother did this to me.”
- b.) “Drinking always calms my nerves.”
- c.) “I can stop drinking anytime I feel like it.”
- d.) “I want to stop drinking right now.”

# ELIMINATE THE CHOICES WHEN THEY'RE NOT OBVIOUS

Which of the following foods will give you the most energy?

- a.) one 6 ounce package of mushrooms
- b.) one medium size chocolate bar
- c.) one bag of potato chips
- d.) one 6 ounce container of Greek yogurt

# WATCH FOR QUALIFYING WORDS

In the MC question below, underline the qualifying word(s).

Which one of the following statements is not true about test-taking?

- a.) Exclude choices you know to be incorrect.
- b.) Never leave a blank on any test.
- c.) Always review your answers if you have time.
- d.) Don't change an answer unless you know it is incorrect.

# CHANGE THE FORMAT OF THE MC QUESTION TO A T/F QUESTION.

In the MC question below, write “T” or “F” for each choice, and then select your answer.

Which one of the following is indicative of a patient who is diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder?

- a.) forgetting simple things
- b.) finding it difficult to concentrate
- c.) having trouble sleeping
- d.) being unable to control upsetting thoughts

# BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION

Although there is a comma after an introductory element, in what situation would you place a comma later in the sentence?

- a.) If you begin a sentence with one prepositional phrase
- b.) If the beginning of the sentence contains two prepositional phrases
- c.) If there is one dependent clause somewhere in the sentence
- d.) If there are two independent clauses near the beginning of the sentence

## READ AND ANSWER THE QUESTION BEFORE LOOKING AT ALL THE CHOICES.

In the MC question below, cover up the choices. Answer the question. Then uncover the choices to see if one choice matches your answer.

What is/are the verb(s) in the main clause of the following sentence?

“As I watched the autumnal sky, I witnessed a flock of birds in formation.”

- 
- a.) watched
  - b.) witnessed
  - c.) watched and witnessed
  - d.) flock

## TAKE TIME TO READ ALL THE CHOICES EVEN IF ONE SEEMS TO “FIT.”

In the MC question below, cover up the choices before answering. After selecting your answer, read ALL the choices before making your final selection.

What is the best adverbial conjunction to use in the following sentence?

I would rather see my physician assistant than my doctor;  
\_\_\_\_\_, the physician assistant is not always available.

- a.) but
- b.) moreover
- c.) however
- d.) on the other hand