

TEST TAKING STRATEGIES SEMINAR

Presented by:

Mrs. Stephanie Bryant

Director of Career Services & Student Employment and Former College Study Skills Professor

BEFORE THE TEST – QUICK TIPS

- Study!
- Use flashcards
- Create a review sheet
- Talk to the professor
- Review with classmates
- Tutorial assistance from ASC
- Your tips:

DURING THE TEST – QUICK TIPS

- Relax, pray, and listen carefully to instructions
- Preview the test – READ THE DIRECTIONS!
- Plan how you will use the allotted time
- Do a mind dump
- Do the easiest questions first
- Rely on your first impressions
- Leave time for review
- Ask the professor for clarification
- Your tips:

AFTER THE TEST – QUICK TIPS

- Do a test error analysis – analyze why the wrong answers were wrong
- Determine your areas of strengths and weaknesses in your test taking skills
- Learn from your mistakes
- Decide how you can improve future test results
- Ask the professor for help
- Your tips:

FREQUENT TEST TAKING MISTAKES

- Not reading and following directions on the test or not checking the board for other instructions or corrections to the test
- Not scanning the test to be sure that all pages are there or noticing questions on back pages
- Not reading all possible answers
- Not asking questions when confused
- Not marking the answer to a test question on the correct number on the Scantron or skipping a number or answering on the test and filling in the wrong space on the Scantron
- Second-guessing the answer instead of going with the first response (the first response is often the right response)
- Not studying correlated information between textbook and notes
- Studying to memorize and not being able to answer application questions
- Other mistakes:

TYPES OF TESTS

1. Objective

- True/False
- Multiple Choice
- Matching
- Fill-in-the-blank

2. Subjective

- Short Answer
- Essay

Guidelines for Answering True-False Questions

- When you do not know the answer - Mark it true!**
 - There are generally more true questions on true-false exams than false questions.
 - Instructors find it difficult to make a false statement look true.
 - Specific detail in the statement may also tend to make it true. For example, the statement "Babe Ruth hit 60 home runs in one season" has a specific detail and is more likely to be true.
- Look for any factor that will make a statement false.**
 - It is easy for the instructor to add a false part to an otherwise true statement.
 - Students often read the question and see some truth and quickly assume that the entire statement is true. For example, "Water boils at 212 degrees in Denver." Water does boil at 212 degrees but not at Denver's altitude.
- Look for extreme modifiers that tend to make the question false.** Extreme modifiers, such as "always, all, never, or only" make it more likely that the question is false. Here is a more complete list of EXTREME modifiers.

all	none	best	absolutely
always	never	worst	absolutely not
only	nobody	everybody	certainly
invariably	no one	everyone	certainly not
- Qualifying words tend to make a question true.** Qualifiers (seldom, often, many) increase the likelihood that the statement is true. Here is a more complete list of QUALIFIERS.

usually	frequently	often	sometimes
some	seldom	many	much
probably	a majority	apt to	most
might	a few	may	unlikely
- Negative words or prefixes complicate the statement.**
 - The prefixes (un-, in-, mis-) will alter the meaning of the statement.
 - Double negatives make a positive. For example "not uncommon" actually means common.
- Questions that state a reason tend to be false.**
 - Words in the statement that cause justification or reason (since, because, when, if) tend to make the statement false.
 - Pay close attention because the reason that is given may be incorrect or incomplete.

There is no substitute for the truth. Many concentrated hours of study to force facts into your memory is the best way to prepare for true-false questions. Teachers, however, often present the questions in such a way that even though you know the material, you can still get the question wrong. Be sure to carefully read each question and look for the clues mentioned above.

TRUE - FALSE QUIZ

- | | T | F |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. With true or false questions, the questions are generally true. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. No one should keep a steady pace when taking a test. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. With any extra time, you should review your answers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. You should never waste time reading the directions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. There is no substitute for the truth. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Negative words sometimes affect the truth. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. It is smart to state a reason why the question would be false. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. You should never pay attention to qualifiers that will make the question true. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Guidelines for Answering Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1. Formulate your own answer before reading the options.**
 - Focus on finding an answer without the help of the alternatives.
 - This process will increase your concentration.
 - Doing this will help you exercise your memory.
- 2. Eliminate unlikely answers first.**
 - Eliminating two alternatives quickly may increase your probability to 50/50 or better.
 - Use the true-false methods described earlier and find the false alternative.
- 3. Select numbered answers from the middle range, not the extremes.**
 - For example, if the height of a mountain is requested, eliminate 20,000 feet (high), and 3,000 feet (low). Then choose between 8,000 feet and 11,000 feet.
- 4. Select answers that are longer and more descriptive.**
 - Longer (true) answers stand out and contain more detail.
 - Shorter (false) answers are created quickly as throw aways.
 - Descriptive detail is given to help you identify the truth.
- 5. Similar answers give you a clue! One of them is correct, the other is disguised.**
- 6. Watch out for "NOT TRUE?"**
 - Remember to reverse your procedure and eliminate truth.
 - Use the true-false methods described earlier and find the false alternative.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

Choose the answer that completes the question most accurately and circle the letter.

- The right answer in multiple-choice questions tend to be:
 - short
 - at least a paragraph long
 - longer and more descriptive
- When guessing on a multiple-choice question with numbers in the answer:
 - always pick the most extreme
 - pick answers in the middle range
 - skip it
- What is the process of elimination in a multiple-choice question?
 - skipping the entire question
 - eliminating the wrong answers
 - just guessing
- What section should you do last when taking a test?
 - the easiest
 - the last part of the test
 - the most difficult because you have already completed the objective questions
- What should you not do when taking a multiple-choice test?
 - pay attention to patterns
 - read each question carefully
 - read all choices
- What is a good method for guessing?
 - use the process of elimination
 - always pick "A"
 - look at your friend's paper

Guidelines for Answering Matching Questions

- Examine both lists to determine the types of items and their relationships.**
 - Remember the test maker may be testing to see if you have mastered terms.
 - Look completely through both lists to become familiar, build your confidence, and enhance your memory of key words or phrases.
- Use one list as a starting point and go through the second list to find a match.**
 - This process organizes your thinking and promotes memory.
 - As you become familiar with the second list, you will be able to go straight to a match that you saw when looking through the lists a previous time.
- Move through the entire list before selecting a match because a more correct answer may follow.**
- Cross off items on the second list when you are certain that you have a match.**
- Do not guess** until all absolute matches have been made because you will likely eliminate an answer that could be used for a later choice.

MATCHING QUIZZES

Quiz #1

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. _____ Headphones | a. is where the heart is |
| 2. _____ Puppies | b. live in mountainous areas |
| 3. _____ Weight lifting | c. are relaxing to read |
| 4. _____ Deer | d. is used to write on |
| 5. _____ Comedy | e. are cute |
| 6. _____ Home | f. is good for making one stronger |
| 7. _____ Cars | g. usually gives us a good laugh |
| 8. _____ Horn | h. these range in price from \$100 to over \$1,000,000 |
| 9. _____ Books | i. Used to motivate other motorists |
| 10. _____ Paper | j. when used too often can hurt the ears |

Quiz #2

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. _____ Eliminate unlikely answers first. | a. True/False |
| 2. _____ Examine both lists. | b. Multiple Choice |
| 3. _____ Look for extreme modifiers. | c. Matching |
| 4. _____ Provide a descriptive answer when you can't think of the word. | d. Fill-in-the-Blank |
| 5. _____ Organize your thoughts and use lists or bullets whenever possible. | e. Short Answer |
| 6. _____ Can usually be answered in a couple of sentences. | f. Essay |
| 7. _____ Concentrate on the number of blanks and length of the space. | |
| 8. _____ Negative words or prefixes complicate the statement. | |

Guidelines for Answering Fill-in-the-Blank (or Sentence Completion) Questions

1. **Concentrate on the number of blanks in the sentence and never assume the length of the blank has anything to do with the length of the answer.** The test maker is giving you clues to the answer by adding spaces but may not make the space equal to the length of the word.
2. **Read each question and be sure that you know what is being asked.** Look for key words in the sentence that may trigger a response.
3. **Provide a descriptive answer when you cannot think of the exact word or words.** The instructor will often reward your effort with partial credit.
4. **Pay close attention to the word immediately preceding the blank; if the word is “an,” give a response that begins with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u).**

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

1. When doing fill-in-the-blank questions, read the _____ with the intent to give an answer.
2. Always concentrate on the _____ of blanks to fill in.
3. When you don't know the exact _____, provide a descriptive answer.
4. Do not _____ until absolute matches have been made with matching questions.
5. Use the process of _____ when you do not know the answer.
6. Choose the _____ and not the extremes.
7. Read the _____ carefully, looking for any answer to make it false.
8. Rely on your _____ and don't watch for patterns.
9. _____ from your test!

Guidelines for Short Answer Questions

1. **Most short answer questions can be answered in a couple of sentences.** Many can be answered with just a word or phrase, a short numerical answer, or occasionally a simple graph.
2. **Respond directly to the question or directive.** Focus on key words and ideas called for. Eliminate those that do not directly address the information requested in the question.
3. **Write concise answers.** Connect key facts into short sentences according to the instructions.
4. **If you can think of several answers, let the professor know.** The professor may give you a clue to the correct answer he/she is looking for.
5. **When you don't know, guess with common sense.** You could get more test points by making an intelligent guess rather than leaving an answer blank.
6. **Be sure you know what kind of question you are answering.** Types of short answer questions:
 - If it's a **definition question**, don't give an example instead. *Example:* "What is meant by economies of scale?" *Bad Answer:* "Economies of scale is like when Ford Motors came up with the idea of assembly-line production of automobiles." *Good Answer:* "Economies of scale is when the long-run average cost of production falls as output rises."
 - If it's an **example question**, don't give a definition instead. *Example:* "Give an example of substitute goods." *Bad Answer:* "A substitute good is one that you'll buy more of when the price of a similar good goes up." *Good Answer:* "Butter and margarine."
 - If it's an **explanation question**, don't give a definition or an example. *Example:* "Why do economies of scale occur?" *Bad Answer:* "Economies of scale occur when the average cost of production goes down as output goes up." (This is a correct description of economies of scale but doesn't say *why* the average cost goes down as output goes up.) *Another Bad Answer:* "Economies of scale happens when you can make more cars for cheaper by having an assembly line." (Answer is too specific because economies of scale is a concept that applies to more than just cars.) *Good Answer:* "Economies of scale usually occur because firms can make use of mass production techniques that involve greater specialization of both labor and capital."
 - If it's a **relationship question**, don't just give two definitions (unless the wording of the definitions makes the relationship obvious). *Example:* "For most goods, what is the relationship between price and quantity demanded?" *Bad Answer:* "Price is the amount of money you have to pay for the good. Quantity demanded is how much you buy." *Good Answer:* "As the price of a good rises, quantity demanded tends to fall."

Guidelines for Essay Questions

- 1. Organize your thoughts before you begin to write.**
 - A short outline on a separate piece of paper will improve your answer.
 - Write the topics and the key introductory words.
- 2. Paraphrase the original question to form your introductory statement.**
 - This process helps you get the question straight in your mind.
 - Restating the question allows the professor to see how you understood the question. Perhaps you understood it to mean something other than the professor intended.
- 3. Use the principles of English composition.**
 - Form a clear thesis statement (statement of purpose) and place it as near to the beginning as possible.
 - Provide clear explanations to back up the main concept.
 - Remember, a complete answer usually has a main idea, supporting details and illustrative examples.
- 4. Write clearly! Professors need to be able to read it.**
 - Making professors work hard to read lowers your grade.
 - Write or print clearly, using a dark-colored erasable ballpoint pen.
 - Avoid crossing out words or sentences and don't smudge your paper.
 - Remember to save some space for a brief but adequate summary.
- 5. Use lists or bullets wherever possible.**
 - Numbers or bullets allow the professor to easily see your points.
 - Never bury your lists or key points in the middle of a paragraph.
 - If you must use a long paragraph, underline your key points.
- 6. Identify the verbs or words in the question that give you direction.**
 - Key words in each question describe the task you are expected to complete.
 - Circle the direction words in the question to make sure that you are focusing on the desired task.
 - Sample direction verbs or adjectives, and their generally intended action or task, are listed below.

Direction verbs that ask you to *review an idea or concept* in your own words:

summarize, survey, discuss, explain

Direction verbs that ask for a *set of items or ideas* that were presented in lecture or readings:
(These action words generally require more precise wording of items by giving numbers or steps.)

trace, outline, list, diagram, solve

Direction verbs that ask you to *speak in favor of a concept* or give the reasons why it should be accepted as valid:

defend, argue, debate, contend, justify

Direction verbs that ask for a *specific meaning* or picture of a concept:

define, clarify, describe, depict, illustrate

Direction verbs that ask you to show *differences* in several ideas or situations:

contrast, compare, distinguish, differentiate

Direction adjectives that ask for *specific information* the instructor considers important:

significant, critical, key, important, major, principal, essential, vital

Answers: True/False Quiz (1.T; 2.F; 3.T; 4.F; 5.T; 6.T; 7.T; 8.F); Multiple Choice Quiz (1.C; 2.B; 3.B; 4.C; 5.A; 6.A);
Matching Quizzes: Quiz#1 (1.j; 2.e; 3.f; 4.b; 5.g; 6.a; 7.h; 8.i; 9.c; 10.d), Quiz#2 (1.b; 2.c; 3.a; 4.d; 5.f; 6.e; 7.d; 8.a);
Fill-In (1. question; 2. number; 3. word; 4. guess; 5. elimination; 6. middle range; 7. question; 8. knowledge; 9. Learn)