

USING TEST STRATEGIES

MULTIPLE CHOICE STRATEGIES

1. Answer the easy questions first, then the harder ones. Don't get nervous if some questions look unfamiliar. Skip them and return to them later.
2. Pay attention to qualifiers ("usually," "none," "always," "never") and key words ("except," "all but the following," "the best," "the least," etc.) – underline/circle these!
3. Try to anticipate the correct answer before looking at the options.
4. Read all of the options; eliminate the ones you know are incorrect.
5. Look for options that contain other options. These are called "umbrella" options because the other options fall within their scope.
6. Sometimes the longer response may be the clue to the correct response.

TRUE - FALSE STRATEGIES

1. Watch for absolutes such as **"always," "never," or "all" and "none."** If they are present, chances are the statement is **false**. (BUT NOT ALWAYS!)
2. If a statement is more detailed or specific than most, chances are it is **true**. (BUT NOT ALWAYS!)
3. Never leave a blank – you have a 50% chance of getting it right!
4. Unusual sounding statements are likely to be false.

MATCHING STRATEGIES

1. Read all the items in both columns first before selecting answers.
2. Instead of looking at the one word column first and trying to select a match, read the column with the definitions or explanations and match those to the one-word column.
3. **Mark easy choices first and** eliminate them as you move to the more difficult.

SHORT ANSWER AND FILL-IN-THE-BLANK STRATEGIES

1. If you don't know the complete answer but remember something, write it down.

You may get partial credit if you are partly correct. Leaving a blank will get you nothing.

2. Give general answers if you do not know specifics. Example: Correct answer = 1904; Approximate and possibly correct answer = 1900's
3. Use proper grammar in completing the sentence. Pay attention to plural responses (ex. causes, changes, examples, types of, etc.)
4. Consider the number and length of the lines or blank spaces to be filled in as possible clues to the length of your answer. If the instructor leaves half a page for your answer, be sure you fill it and *not* with extra-large writing. 7

ESSAY QUESTION STRATEGIES

Essay exams require good organization and writing skills. The following hints will help you do your best on essay questions.

1. **Briefly** look over the entire test to budget your time for essay answers. They may take longer than other types of questions.
2. **Read the essay question carefully. Watch for key words** such as "discuss," "compare," "define," etc. A list of these commonly used words follows.
3. **Determine the amount of time** you'll have for each question, and give more time to higher scoring questions.
4. **Do a "Memory Dump."** Jot down on scratch paper any ideas, facts, figures, etc. which could be used in answering the questions.
5. **Make a brief outline of the major points.** In some cases, even if you can't finish the essay, you can get partial credit for the outline.
6. **Count out the number of points you need to make (these are found in the prompt), and make you sure you have that many points.**
7. **Use proper grammar, punctuation and sentence skills.** Always write complete sentences and begin your essay with the wording of the question.
Example: "The five major causes of the American Revolution were..."
8. **Proofread your essay** and make corrections as needed.

COMMON ESSAY TERMS

Analyze examine critically to show essential features

Criticize point out strong and weak points (evaluate)

Compare show differences and similarities between two or more things

Contrast compare to show *differences* only

Define give a clear, detailed, and precise meaning (who or what, never, when or where)

Describe list physical characteristics but often means discuss, explain, identify or give an account of

Discuss/Comment - present essentials and their relationships

Evaluate – determine the significance or worth.

Explain - : To make something understandable (in your own words). To give the reason for or cause of something. To show the development or relationships of something.

Illustrate develop theme or idea in greater detail appraise carefully, giving positive and negative aspects (critique) clarify and interpret details of the problem, theory, etc. Present a step-by-step account of or analysis (how and why) explain or clarify by giving clear, pertinent examples

MATH STRATEGIES

Students whose math skills are not the strongest may be intimidated and do poorly only because they let nervousness take over. Math is no different from any other subject, except that the same rules apply every time, so if you study the rules and practice a lot, you are likely to do well on the test. Here are some other tips.

- Jot down formulas and rules, as long as the instructor knows you did this in class.
- Use pencil so you can make corrections neatly.

- Listen to instructions and read test directions carefully.
- Scan the test first.
- Pay attention to + and – signs, complete problems, and simplify answers.
- Show all your work step by step and turn in your scratch paper (you may get partial credit for work shown).
- Put a box around your answer to make it visible.
- Don't get bogged down on one problem at the cost of missing others.
- Check every answer.
- Don't leave any blanks.
- Ask questions of the instructor if you do not understand something.

GENERAL RULES FOR ALL TESTS

Scan the entire test before you start.

Read the directions and make sure you understand them.

Budget your time. Pace yourself. Try for the most points in the time you have.

Attempt to answer every question. Hard questions can be left until last unless they carry a great deal of value and you need more time in answering them.

Take questions at face value. Do not read things into them.

Answer questions you know first. This relieves tension and gives you confidence, thus allowing you to access your memory as you proceed. If a question seems complicated or difficult to understand, put it in your own words or break it down into understandable parts. □

Learn from the test. Often the answer to a question is found in another test question.