

Test-Wise Strategies

Adapted from: Study Methods and Reading Techniques, Rhonda Atkinson and Debbie Longman, West Publishing

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. If you don't know an answer, skip it, mark it to return to, and go on. Don't waste time mulling over an answer. Go on to the questions you know. Often a clue to the answer is found somewhere within the test.
2. Eliminate grammatically incorrect responses. Sometimes, an answer will be poorly worded, or use a different tense than the question.
3. Often the longest choice is correct. A response may be lengthy in order to make the correct answer absolutely clear.
4. Be sure the right choice is the best choice. Watch for "all of the above," "none of the above," and paired choices.
5. Read questions carefully. *Not* and *except* are small words, but they completely change the meaning of the question.
6. Responses which look like the word to be defined are usually incorrect. These are called attractive distracters because they look so appealing. They are almost always poor choices.
7. If you do not know what the answer is, determine what the answer is not. Eliminate silly choices and use common sense.

True-False Questions

1. Look for words which determine limits. Words like always, never, none, every, and all place no limitations on meaning. Words like some, few, often, many, and frequently limit meaning and are better choices. If you can think of one example which contradicts an unlimited meaning, then it is false.
2. Watch for double negatives. Just as multiplying two negative numbers equals a positive number, two negative words in a sentence indicate a positive relationship in standard English usage.

Matching Questions

Matching sections are somewhat like multiple-choice tests. Thus, the same principles apply. However, there are some strategies for use with matching sections. Often the two items being matched rely on an implied, rather than a stated, association. You are looking for items related in some way. These relationships include a word and its definition, a person and a noted accomplishment, a step in a process and the process from which it comes, etc. As with other questions, complete items you know first. Use the side with the longer responses as your question side. This keeps you from repeatedly reading through numerous lengthy responses. When responses are used only once, do not blindly fill in the last question with the only remaining choice. Check to make sure it fits. If not, recheck all answers.

Math Questions

Many good math students have difficulty with word problems. Panic prevents them from translating a word problem into a numerical one. The first step in solving math problems is to remain calm and avoid negative thinking. Second, picture the problem in your mind. This allows you to determine what the question is asking. Third, identify your facts and the processes required. If possible, estimate the response. Work the problem and check it against your estimate. Recheck if necessary.