

Teaching Students How to Take Exams and Evaluate Their Own Performance

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How do **YOU** Approach a Multiple Choice Test?

Tips for Taking Multiple Choice Tests:

1. Read carefully. Read twice.
2. Try to think of the answer BEFORE looking at the choices.
3. Mark questions you are not sure about and move on.
4. Cross out answers you know are incorrect. Put a ? next to ones that might be possible.
5. Try to figure out why an answer choice might NOT be correct or why a statement might be FALSE rather than true to help eliminate answer choices.
6. Go with the “correct most often or mostly true” statement. Don’t get caught in the minute exceptions.
7. Think about the meanings of prefixes, suffixes, and word roots if you are unfamiliar with the terminology.
8. If the answer choice contains vocabulary you have never seen before (and you studied) it is probably a distractor, not the answer.
9. Watch out for the wording. Is the question asking for the which is true or not true?
10. Use words such as *all*, *more*, *always*, and *only* as clues to the context of the answer.
11. Use the grammar in the question stem to help you (a vs an, plural vs singular).
12. Read the question stem and the answer choice as a sentence. Does it make sense?

What are the benefits of reviewing exams with students?

Disadvantages?

What types of errors do students typically make on multiple choice questions?

Type I Error: “Headbangers” or
“Doh, I knew that”; *Carelessness*

- Read too fast or just spotted key words
- Circled right answer on exam but bubbled incorrectly on scantron or not at all
- Second guessing oneself

Type II Error: “Something about the question”

- Student gets confused by wording. Superficial understanding of topic or problem with the question.

Type III Error: “I just didn’t know the answer”

- Student needs to attend class and STUDY



Tichenor, L. (2009). *Tips on Classroom Assessment: How to Teach Our Students to Take Multiple-Choice Exams.* In *College Science Teachers Guide to Assessment* (pp. 43-44). Arlington: NSTApress.

How do we provide opportunities for reflection on exams when the classes have enrollments from 60-550?

100 students x 5 minutes to hand them their exam and set them at a table or desk to review it= over 8 hours of time

535 students x 5 minutes = over 44 hours



ANALYZING YOUR RETURNED TESTS

Test Item Missed

Study Methods

- I did not read the text thoroughly.
- The information was not in my notes.
- I studied the information but could not remember it.
- I knew the gist of the information but needed verbatim information.
- I knew the information but could not apply it.
- I studied the wrong information.

Test Anxiety

- I experienced mental block.
- I spent too much time daydreaming.
- I was so tired I could not concentrate.
- I was so hungry I could not concentrate.
- I panicked.

Test Taking Skills

- I carelessly marked a wrong choice.
- I did not eliminate grammatically incorrect choices.
- I did not choose the correct choice.
- I did not notice limiting words.
- I did not notice a double negative.
- I changed a correct answer to a wrong one.
- I missed the directions.
- I misread the questions.
- I made poor use of the time provided.
- I wrote poorly organized responses.
- I wrote incomplete responses.

Other:

Strategies for Improvement:

<http://www.las.uh.edu/LSS/study-strategies-handouts.aspx>

Self-evaluation strategies to help students assess preparedness and foster good study skills:

Through clicker questions or short class surveys, ask basic questions:

1. Have you reviewed your class notes since the last lecture?
2. Are you taking notes?
3. Have you read chapter X yet?
4. Did you do the Concept Checks at the end of each chapter section?
5. Can you sketch the process without using your notes or the book?
6. The number of hours I spend studying for this class a week is..
7. When reading the textbook, do you turn headings into questions to help stay focused?
8. Do you take notes on paper or add them to the powerpoints during lecture?
9. Do you have a study group?

How do you advise students to prepare for your exams?

1. Attend class. Participate. Mentally engage.
2. Take notes. Not just key words written on board.
3. Review class notes within 48 hours of lecture.
4. Read the text.
5. Do end of chapter questions.
6. Study with others.
7. Practice recall (avoiding the “illusion of knowing” trap):
 - a) Write out a process or section of material as an outline or paragraph.
 - b) Explain a concept to someone else.
 - c) Diagram a process or draw a structure.
 - d) Make a concept map.
 - e) Do practice tests provided. Make your own.
 - f) Don't just try to memorize answers. Try to understand why other answer choices are not correct.
8. Set up a study schedule and stick to it. Assign an “accountability coach” to ensure you stick to it.
9. Get some sleep before the exam. All-nighters just make the brain foggy.
10. Take a break. A saturated sponge will not take up anymore water. A saturated brain needs time to process information too or it won't soak it up either.



How to read the textbook:

SQ4R

Survey

Question

Read

Recite

wRight

Review

<http://www.las.uh.edu/LSS/handouts/Reading/Summary%20Of%20SQ4R.pdf>