

Introduction

This section is about multiple choice questions and why it is important for students to familiarise themselves with these type of questions in order to perform at their optimum level when answering these questions. Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) can be tricky if a student does not know what to look out for in the questions being asked and how to prepare for MCQs test, exam or quiz. Multiple choice tests are not usually intentionally designed to trick or confuse students, they are designed test students' knowledge and ability.

What are Multiple choice questions?

Multiple choice is a form of objective assessment in which students are asked to select only correct answers from the choices offered as a list. There are different types of multiple choice questions and they can be in a form of true/false questions, selecting the best answer or odd one out or other options. Multiple choice items consist of a stem and several alternative answers, among which are the correct answer and one or more incorrect answers.

The *stem* is usually a question asked to the students, or an incomplete statement to be completed, as well as any other relevant information. The options are the possible answers that the student can choose from, with the correct answer called the *key* and the incorrect answers called *distractors*. Only one answer can be “keyed” as correct. Usually, a correct answer earns a set number of points toward the total mark, and an incorrect answer earns nothing.

Strategies on answering Multiple Choice Questions

- 1. Read the entire question**
Read a multi-choice question in its entirety before glancing over the answer options. Students often think they know what a question is asking before reading it and often jump straight to what they think is the most logical answer. This often turns out to be a big mistake that can cost you dearly in multiple-choice exams. Read each question thoroughly before reviewing answer options
- 2. Answer it in your mind first**
After reading a question, answer it in your mind before reviewing the answer options. This will help prevent you from talking yourself out of the correct answer
- 3. Eliminate wrong answers**
Eliminate answer options which you are 100 percent sure are incorrect before selecting the answer you believe is correct. Even when you think you know the right answer, eliminating those answers you know are incorrect first will ensure that your answer choice is the correct choice
- 4. Use the process of elimination**
Using the process of elimination, cross out all the answers you know are incorrect, then focus on the remaining answers. Not only does this strategy save time, it greatly increases your likelihood of selecting the correct answer
- 5. Select the best answer**
It's important to select the *best* answer to the question being asked, not just an answer that seems correct. Often many answers will seem correct, but there is typically one best answer to the question that your lecturer is looking for

6. Read every answer option

Read every answer option prior to choosing a final answer. This may seem like a no brainer to some, but it is a common mistake students make. As we pointed out in the previous section, there is usually a *best* answer to every multiple-choice question. If you quickly assume you know the correct answer, without first reading every answer option, you may end up not selecting the *best* answer

7. Answer the questions you know first

If you are having difficulty answering a question, move on and come back to tackle it once you have answered all the questions you know. Sometimes, answering easier question first can offer you insight into answering more challenging questions

8. Make an educated guess

If it will not count against your mark, make an educated guess for any question you are unsure about. Do not leave it unanswered

9. It is usually advisable to stick with your first choice, but not always

It is best to stick with the answer you first chose after reading the question. It is usually counterproductive to constantly second guess yourself and change your answer. However, this does not mean that your first answer choice is necessarily always the correct option. Only change your answer when you are certain that your first choice is incorrect

10. The more information... the better

More often than not, the correct answer usually contains more information than the other options. This is good to know if you must guess.

Additional Resources

Kehoe, Jerard (1995). Writing multiple-choice test items: *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 4(9). Retrieved February 12, 2008.

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/writing-good-multiple-choice-test-questions/>

<https://www.dmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/MULTIPLE-CHOICE-TEST-TAKING-STRATEGIES.pdf>

Summary

In this section we looked at multiple choice questions, what they are and why they are used by lecturers to test your ability and knowledge of the content. Multiple choice questions can be tricky if you do not know which strategies to apply and how to prepare yourself before answering the questions. We shared the tips and strategies you can apply when answering multiple choice questions and application of these strategies might help you next time you are required to take a multiple choice test, exam or quiz.