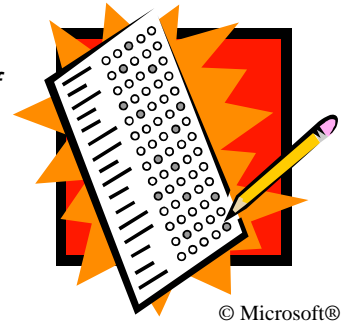


Learning Café Quick Study Tips

MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS

Multiple choice tests – students either love them or hate them! Regardless of how you feel about them, you are likely to have frequent encounters with multiple choice questions during your time at college. Therefore, it is critical that you learn strategies for dealing with them.



Why do some students have difficulty on multiple choice tests?

- **Multiple choice questions are often more complex than students expect.**
In preparing for multiple choice tests, students often study mostly for recognition of basic concepts & terminology. They believe if they memorize a definition or concept, they will see the idea in a multiple choice question, recognize it & choose the appropriate option. However, this type of study practice often leaves students underprepared for multiple choice tests.

Multiple choice tests do not just test students' abilities to memorize; rather, they require students to evaluate, make judgements, & apply different aspects of learning. During study, students must move beyond rote learning, digging past superficial levels of information & applying concepts to different contexts.

- **Multiple choice tests require close, careful reading.**
Multiple choice questions often demand a great deal of close, careful reading. Therefore, different types of students may have issues with these types of questions:
 - Slow readers are often challenged to complete the tests in the allotted time.
 - Weak readers may be challenged by difficult vocabulary or phrasing.
 - Careless readers may read too quickly or misinterpret information.
- **Multiple choice tests require critical thought.**
Students often complain that multiple choice questions are designed to trick students. Indeed, multiple choice questions can be complex in their wording & options often appear quite similar; however, the intent of these questions is to challenge students to be analytical & critical in their thinking. After all, students have a 20 – 25% chance of obtaining the correct answer on a multiple choice question without having studied at all! Multiple choice questions are designed to distinguish between students who can decode, evaluate, & apply the information completely & those who cannot.

Like any exam, multiple choice tests require appropriate preparation. However, there are also specific strategies that can be used to achieve better results on these types of test questions.

A strategy for conquering multiple choice questions:

- 1) **Cover the options (with paper or your hand) before reading the question.**
 - It decreases the feeling of being overwhelmed with information.
 - It forces you to focus on the question.
 - It keeps you from being distracted by incorrect options.

- 2) **Read & process the question.**
 - Read the entire question to get a general idea about what the question is asking. Then, process the question by underlining key words & rephrasing the question into your own words. This helps you clarify your thinking.
 - If necessary, ask for permission to write on your test paper.

- 3) **Predict an answer & jot down what you know.**
 - It is important to “know what you know” before looking at the options, or you may be easily confused by some options.
 - Your prediction & notes are a reflection of your initial thinking. Use this knowledge to analyze the options provided in the question. Remember, your initial instincts are often correct! Avoid second-guessing.

- 4) **Process & evaluate each of the options.**
 - Evaluate each option *one at a time*. As with the question, underline key words & phrases. Avoid the temptation to jump to an option just because you recognize some of the words.
 - It can be helpful to treat each option as if it were a true/false statement. Develop a system for this evaluation. For example,
 - T or F = I know this is true or false.
 - T? or F?= I think this is true or false.
 - Watch for
 - words which don't allow for exceptions (ex., *always, all, never, none*).
 - negatives (ex., *not, never, except*). They alter meaning & may confuse your thinking.
 - jargon (fancy sounding language) often used to distract under prepared students.

- 5) **Cross off options you know are wrong.**

- 6) **Evaluate the remaining options & make a choice.**
 - Which option(s) reflects your initial prediction & answer the question?
 - What is similar or different about the options?
 - Are there exceptions to any statements which would make them wrong?

- 7) **If necessary, guess (unless there is a penalty) but make it an *educated* one.**
 - Remember what you eliminated & keep your initial instincts in mind.

For more information on any of the suggestions given here, please visit the Learning Café, located in the library (CE1340) / 403-382-6952 / learningcafe@lethbridgecollege.ca
Or sign up for a Student Success Workshop!