

# Tackling Multiple Choice Questions

Another step toward a successful exam  
experience!

A series of horizontal stripes in various colors including orange, green, blue, purple, and red, located at the bottom of the slide.

# Studying for Exam...

Here's what not to do!

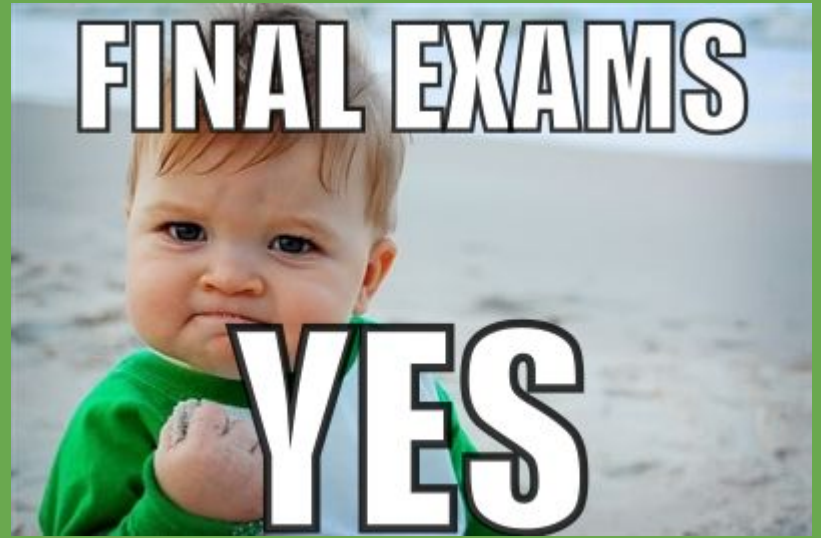
*We Cram Hard...*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ATQgn6GWAc>



## A Better Plan...

With some planning and a few strategic tips,  
your exam experience can be MUCH better!



# Tackling Multiple Choice Questions

Studying for a multiple choice exam requires a special method of preparation distinctly different from an essay exam.

Multiple choice exams ask you to recognize a correct answer among a set of options that include 3 or 4 wrong answers (called *distractors*), rather than asking you to produce a correct answer entirely from your own mind.

Students commonly consider multiple choice exams easier than essay exams. Perhaps the most obvious reasons are that:

- The correct answer is guaranteed to be among the possible responses. A student can score points with a lucky guess.
- Many multiple choice exams tend to emphasize basic definitions or simple comparisons, rather than asking students to analyze new information or apply theories to new situations.

- Because multiple choice exams usually contain many more questions than essay exams, each question has a lower point value and thus offers less risk.



Despite these factors, multiple choice exams can actually be very difficult. Consider that:

- Because multiple choice exams contain many questions, they force you to be familiar with a much **broader range** of material than essay exams do.
- Multiple choice exams also usually expect you to have a greater **familiarity with details** such as specific dates, names, or vocabulary than most essay exams do. You cannot easily "bluff" on a multiple choice exam.

# Preparation

To prepare for a multiple choice exam, consider the following steps:

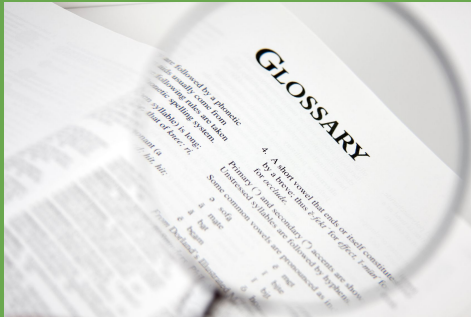
- **Begin studying early.** Multiple choice exams tend to focus on details, and you cannot retain many details effectively in short-term memory. If you **learn a little bit each day** and allow plenty of time for **repeated reviews**, you will build a much more reliable long-term memory.



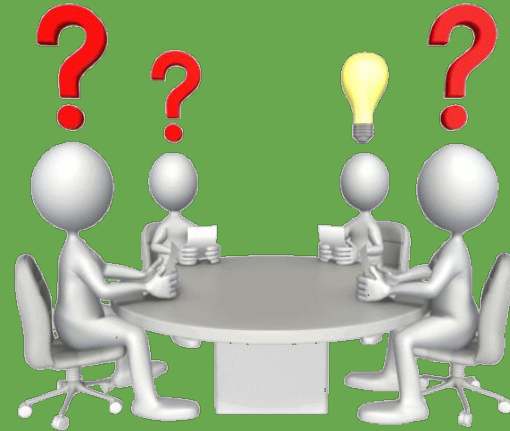
- Make sure that you **identify and understand** everything that your teacher emphasized in class. Pay particular attention to fundamental **terms and concepts** that describe important events or features, or that tie related ideas and observations together. These are the items that most commonly appear on multiple choice exams.



- If your textbook highlights **new vocabulary** or key definitions, be sure that you understand them. Do not simply memorize the book's definitions. Most teachers will rephrase things in their own words as they write exam questions, so you must be sure that you really **know what the definitions mean**.



- **Brainstorm possible questions** with several other students who are also taking the course.
- **Practice** sample questions on a study guide or quizzes/tests you wrote earlier in the course.



# Answering M.C. Questions:

There are many strategies for maximizing your success on multiple choice exams, but the best way to improve your chances is to **study carefully** before the exam.

There is no substitute for knowing the right answer!

- Before you begin taking the exam, enter all pieces of required information on your Scantron sheet. If you are so eager to start that you forget to enter your name, your results may never be scored. Remember: your teacher will not be able to identify you by handwriting.

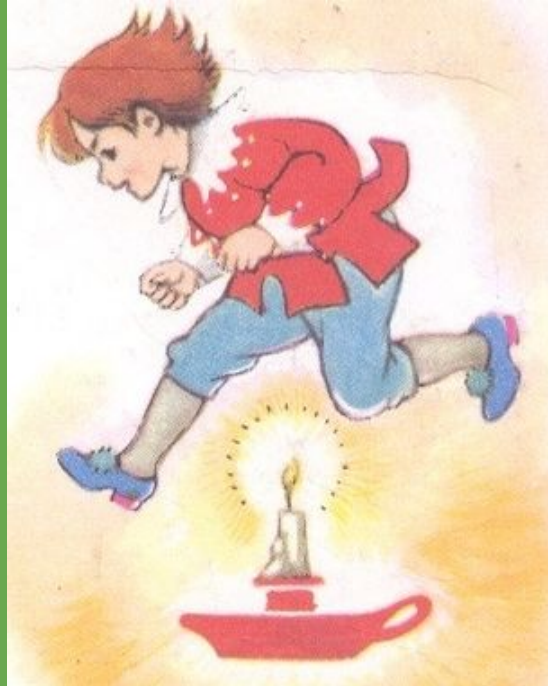
- **Read each question carefully.** Multiple-choice tests examine your ability to read carefully and thoughtfully, as much as they test your ability to recall and reason.



- Always **cover up the possible responses** with a piece of paper or with your hand while you read the *stem*, or body of the question. Try to **anticipate the correct response** before you are distracted by seeing the possible answers. Then, uncover the responses. If you see the response that you anticipated, circle it and then check to be sure that none of the other responses is better.

Jack was nimble and quick. What could he jump over?

- A. a fence
- B. a puddle
- C. a pile of books
- D. a candlestick





- **Identify the subject area.** Identifying what lesson, reading, or lab the question is from might help you narrow the choice of possible responses.
- **Read each of the responses.** Don't just stop when you come to one that seems likely.
- **Don't dismiss a response because it seems too obvious.**  
When you are prepared for the test, some of the questions may appear very straight forward.
- **Don't be persuaded by fancy terms in the answers.** Just because it sounds impressive doesn't mean it is correct.

# Troubleshooting Tips

*If you do not see a response that you expected, then consider some of the following strategies to eliminate responses that are probably wrong. None of these strategies is fool-proof, but using them together can increase your chances of success.*



- **Eliminate options you know to be incorrect.** Underline or highlight the words in questions that eliminate the option.
- **Question options that are totally unfamiliar to you.** When you have studied well, the correct answer should be familiar.
- **Identify key words.** Circle or underline key words such as “*all*”, “*always*”, “*never*”, “*none*”, “*not*”, “*few*”, “*many*”, “*some*”, and “*sometimes*”. Responses that use absolute words, such as “*always*” or “*never*” are less likely to be correct than ones that use conditional words like “*usually*” or “*probably*”.

Jane is taller than Danny. Danny is 148cm. Jane is shorter than Jonathan. Jonathan is 196cm. How tall is Jane?

A. 136 cm

B. 172 cm

C. 202 cm



Select the most correct statement:

- A. April showers always bring May flowers.
- B. April showers usually bring May flowers.
- C. April showers rarely bring May flowers.
- D. April showers never bring May flowers.



- ***"All of the above"*** is often a correct response. If you can verify that more than one of the responses is probably correct, then choose *"all of the above."*
- ***"None of the above"*** is usually an incorrect response, but this is less reliable than the *"all of the above"* rule.

1. The word tale is synonymous with:

- A. lyric
- B. fable
- C. legend

D. both B and C are correct  
~~E. none of the above is correct~~

The following activities promote a healthy lifestyle:

- A. Hiking
- B. Yoga
- C. Zumba
- D. All of the above



- Be careful not to be trapped by **double negatives**. E.g. “Toronto is *not unlike* New York.” Two ‘negatives’ equal a ‘positive’, so this means Toronto and New York are alike.
- **Look for grammatical clues.** If the stem ends with the indefinite article "an," for example, then the correct response probably begins with a vowel. A response that repeats key words that are in the stem is likely to be correct. Question options that grammatically don't fit with the stem.



A maple tree is not unlike:

- A. An oak tree
- B. A bicycle
- C. A red rose
- D. A pine tree



Harpal's favourite fruit is an:

- A. cherries
- B. apples
- C. orange
- D. banana



- **The longest response is often the correct one**, because of the need to load it with qualifying adjectives or phrases. This makes the answer either more specific or more inclusive.
- Give each option the "**true-false test**". If you are asked to determine the “best” answer, you will be able to eliminate some potential answers by asking yourself whether the statement is true or false. If it is true, it is a candidate for the being the “best” answer. If it is false, eliminate it.

The best city in which to live in Canada is:

- A. Toronto
- B. King City
- C. Oak Ridges
- D. Vancouver



- **Beware of "look alike options".** Sometimes answers look very similar. Probably one of them is correct; choose the best one, and then eliminate choices that mean basically the same thing, and therefore cancel each other out.
- If two alternatives seem correct, **compare them for differences**, and then refer to the stem to find your best answer.

In the ice storm, Toronto lost \_\_\_\_\_ of its urban forest due to ice damage. \_\_\_\_\_ people were without power for up to a week.

- A. much, several
- B. some, several
- C. much, few
- D. little, few



# Time Management

If you cannot answer a question **within a minute or less, skip it** and plan to come back later.

Transfer all responses to the answer sheet at the same time, once you have marked all questions on your exam. This reduces the possibility of a bubbling error on the Scantron card. **You must be mindful to leave time to complete this task.**

Take the time to check your work before you hand in the answer sheet.

# Bubble Wisely

Be sure that you have filled the appropriate bubbles carefully **IN PENCIL**. The Scantron machine cannot recognize ink.

**Colour the entire bubble.** Do not simply 'X' or check-mark the circle.

**Thoroughly erase** any accidental marks or changed answers.



# Want to hear more tips?

Try these videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zm3Jq4JYTEI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73ZDMd3KmjU>



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
STUDY  
ON**