

Test Taking Tips for Specific Types of Tests

These are not foolproof ways to take a test. There is no substitute for studying.

True and False:

1. There is no substitute for the truth. If any part of the question is wrong, the whole thing is false.
2. Answer the questions as quickly as possible. Don't look for hidden meanings; just go with your first instinct.
3. When in doubt, guess true. Instructors tend to emphasize the true information.
4. Look for extreme modifiers that tend to make the question false: all, always, never, only, etc.
5. Identify qualifiers that tend to make the question true:
E.g. usually, few, frequently, often, most, etc.
6. Watch out for negative words that may affect the truth:
e.g. The prefixes "un-," "im-," and "mis-"
7. Double negatives make the statement true: e.g. not uncommon, actually means common.
8. Questions that state a reason or explanation tend to be false.
9. Questions with more facts tend to be false.

Sentence Completion or Fill-in-the-Blank Questions:

1. Read the question with the intent to give an answer and make the sentence grammatically correct.
2. Provide a descriptive answer when you cannot think of the exact word or words.

Matching Questions:

1. Examine both lists to determine the types of items and their relationships.
2. Use one list as a starting point and go through the second list to find a match.
3. Move through the entire list before selecting a match.
4. If you make a match before going through the entire list you may make an error, because an answer later in the list may be more correct.
5. Cross off items on the second list when you are certain that you have a match. It will help you stay organized.
6. Do not guess until all absolute matches have been made.
7. If you guess early in the process you may eliminate an answer that could be used correctly for a later choice.

Multiple Choice:

1. Try to answer the question before looking at the answers.
2. Read all the answers and look for the one which best completes the statement or question.
3. Use the process of elimination.
4. When numbers are included in each possible answer, choose the numbers that are in the middle range, not the extremes.
5. Choose answers that are longer and more descriptive.
6. When two very similar answers appear it is likely that one of them is correct and the other is a disguise.
7. Choices containing unfamiliar terms are not likely to be correct.
8. Watch out for negative words in the instructions or in the main question: e.g. Which one does NOT. . .

Essay Questions:

1. Before you begin to write, organize your thoughts with a short outline.
2. Paraphrase the original question to form your introductory statement.
3. Write your answer clearly so the reader will be able to understand your ideas.
4. Read each essay question carefully with the intent to identify the verbs or words that give you direction. Circle the direction verbs that ask you:
 - a. to review an idea or concept (summarize, survey, discuss, explain)
 - b. for a set of items (trace, outline, list, diagram, solve)
 - c. to speak in favor of a concept or give the reasons why it should be accepted as valid (defend, argue, debate, contend, justify)
 - d. for a specific meaning or picture of a concept (define, clarify, describe, depict, illustrate)
 - e. to show differences in several ideas or situations (contrast, compare, distinguish, differentiate)
5. Use good principles of English composition when answering all types of essay questions.
 - a. i.e. form a clear thesis statement, use examples to back up your answers, always include a conclusion
6. Keep to the point.
7. Try for quality, not just quantity.
8. Proofread your completed answer.