

Multiple Choice Exams

Students seem to either love or hate multiple choice exams. Some people like them because they just have to choose an answer rather than make one up. However, other people dislike them because they find them so confusing.

Here are some explanations about the purpose of multiple choice exam questions and tips about how they are structured. Understanding these principles will help maximise your success with this type of exam.

Purposes of multiple choice questions

What are they testing?	Sample Question	Preparation Strategies
Basic Knowledge Facts, figures, definitions.	Government intervention into the free flow of trade is most effective in a _____ industry. a) mature b) infant c) declining d) proprietary	Rote learning strategies for memorization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use memory tools like MNEMONICS where the first letters of a series of terms are used to create a word eg. ROYGBIV is made up from the first letters of the colours of the rainbow. ➤ Create a glossary of terms and their definitions in A-Z order ➤ Use flash cards by writing the term on one side and the definition on the other side. Useful for revising on the bus or waiting for a lecture.
Application Applying knowledge to a particular context	Consider the following scenario: Derrick Industries wants to sell its services overseas, but only if it can act on its own and service its clients from a central location. Based on these objectives, the appropriate foreign entry mode is: a) turnkey operation b) franchising c) exporting d) licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read case studies and examples in textbooks. ➤ Think of/ visualize examples of how the concept may be applied in the 'real' world.
Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation Combining and using knowledge to address a 'real life' scenario.	Copia Engineering Company wants to adopt a more market- oriented management style. To do this they will need to: a) Think about customer satisfaction as a factor in company planning. b) Consider technology and cost cutting. c) focus on locating new opportunities for marketing d) Both a) and b) Note answer a) is correct but b) is incorrect therefore the answer must be c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Will need to understand the elements that contribute to the concept (market orientation) being presented and be able to compare these with other orientations. ➤ Collect and learn information in a table format to easily see distinctions and similarities between concepts.

Structure of multiple choice questions

Type of Question	Sample question	How do I answer this (or increase my chances of guessing correctly)?
Complete the statement	In a theoretically ideal _____ the company monopolises the market and has a major control of the means of production. a) Cartel b) Monopoly c) Duopoly d) None of the above	You are given an incomplete statement and have to select the correct answer to make the completed statement correct. There is repetition between words in the question and one of the answers. This is often an indication that this answer is correct.
Choose the most accurate	Which of the following options provides the best description of the symptoms of neurosis? a) Anxiety, hysteria, phobias b) Anxiety, depression, lucidity c) Depression, passivity, phobias d) Hysteria, phobias, passivity	In subjects where it is difficult to give an exact answer, you may be asked to choose the 'most accurate' answer. Read all the answers; don't just choose the first one that looks right.
Negative choices: use of 'not', 'except' and 'least'	Which of the following is not a non-variable overhead? a) Rent b) Raw materials c) Loan repayments d) All of the above	Convert all negatives to positives and look for the opposite answer (eg. look for the answers which <u>are</u> variable overheads) Select the answer that does not fit in.
Extension questions	The Freudian Electra Complex pertains to: a) males b) females c) electrical activity in the brain d) does not exist	Look for grammatical clues where the question and the answer don't make a grammatically correct sentence e.g. d) does not complete the sentence grammatically so it is automatically incorrect. Even if you don't know the answer, your choices have been reduced by 25%.

Structure of multiple choice questions (cont.)

<p>Absolute terms and generalisations</p>	<p>The Australian Government's immigration policy specifically related to the Asia Pacific region between 2000 and 2004 was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>totally</i> successful in stopping illegal entry into Australian waters. b) <i>absolutely</i> committed to preserving the human rights of detainees. c) <i>moderately</i> successful in reducing the numbers of illegal entrants into Australian waters. 	<p>Be wary of answers which use words like always, never, only, must. These are more likely to be incorrect.</p> <p>Most situations are too complex for absolute extremes.</p>
<p>If two of the alternatives are similar, give them your consideration.</p>	<p>Businesses such as 'Flight Centre' and 'Harvey World Travel' would be considered to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) tourism consultants b) airline agents c) tourism promoters d) holiday agents 	
<p>Using Numbers</p>	<p>According to Smith & Watson's (2003) research, about ____% of terminally ill patients admitted to requesting their doctor's support in assisted suicide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 30% b) 20% c) 9% d) 3% <p>What proportion of youth identified in Johnson's (2002) survey admitted attending underage venues on a regular basis?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) .25 b) .75 c) $\frac{1}{4}$ d) $\frac{1}{2}$ 	<p>The opposite is the case when using numbers – the most specific is often correct.</p> <p>Most answers are not neat round numbers but lecturers often use round numbers when they are filling in alternative answers.</p> <p>Look for numbers that are the same but shown in a different format, i.e. percentages and fractions. If these occur in the one question they both can't be right so they are probably both wrong.</p>

Tips for answering multiple choice questions in an exam situation

1. **Start with the questions that you can easily answer.**
2. **Cover the choices and answer the question yourself first.** Then look at the alternatives. If you have prepared for the exam, your initial answer will most likely be correct.
3. **Lightly cross out the choices you know are wrong** if you are not sure of the answer. You can more easily see the choices you have left.
4. **Don't skim a multiple choice test.** Read the questions and answers carefully. Many questions have pairs of answers that are very similar.
5. **Underline the key words in the question.** This helps you focus on what exactly is being asked.
6. **Be sure to read all the choices given.** One answer may be correct but another answer may be more precise in its detail and therefore the more correct answer.
7. **Watch for key words such as *always, only, all, never, completely*.** Absolute terms like this often indicate the wrong answer.
8. **Translate any double negative statements into positive ones.** This reduces confusion.
9. Keep in mind that **the correct answer is often found in one of a pair** of very similar answers.
10. **Answer every question**, unless there is a penalty for wrong answers. Even if you only guess, you may guess correctly and gain more marks.

