

## Test Question Analysis

### True/False Questions

1. *Watch out for qualifiers:* Qualifiers may be grouped into sets. The six most used sets are:
  - All – Most – Some – None (No)
  - Always – Usually – Sometimes – Never
  - Great – Much – Little – No
  - Good – Bad
  - Is – Is Not

Within each set, the qualifiers may overstate a true/false statement, understate it, or make it just right. Memorize the six sets. They will help you answer many true/false questions.

2. *Check each part of the statement:* If any part of a true/false statement is false, then the whole statement is false. For a statement to be true, all parts must be true. Be suspicious of a statement that contains a string of items, but doesn't conclude that it is false only because it contains the string. Some tricky, (and usually false) statements are made up of two "sub-statements," both of which may be true. The two sub-statements are connected by a conjunction such as *therefore, thus, because, consequently, or so*, or a phrase such as *as a result*. What generally makes the statement false is that the second sub-statement doesn't logically follow from the first. In other words, the two parts are not directly related, although the statement is presented as if they are.
3. *Beware of the negative:* Negative words can upset or complicate your thinking. Negative words include *not* and *cannot*, and the negative prefixes are *dis-*, *il-*, *im-*, *in-*, *ir-*, *non-*, and *un-*. (For example: *inconsequential*, or *illogical*.) When you are confronted with such a statement, begin by circling the negative words and negative prefixes. They try to get the meaning of the statement without the negatives. Finally, reread the sentence to find out whether it is true or false in its entirety.
4. *Think "true" – and guess when you must:* Most true/false statements contain more true statements than false statements, simply because they are made up by teachers who would rather leave true information in your mind. Of course, some teachers try to fool you. On a true/false test, it is best to guess at answers you don't know, even if credit is subtracted for wrong answers. According to the laws of probability, you should get 50 percent right when you guess.

### Multiple Choice Questions

*Most multiple choice questions are of the incomplete statement type. A partial statement (called the stem) leads grammatically into four or five sentence endings, or options, listed directly under it. One of the options is the correct answer. The other (incorrect) options are called distracters or decoys.*

1. Before you even look at a question on a multiple choice test, you must **read the directions carefully**. Some say, "mark the one best answer," whereas others may require that you "mark all correct answers." You will lose credit if you mark more than one answer in the first case, or if you miss a correct option in the second case.
2. Begin each question by reading the stem and all the options all the way through. Don't be in a rush to mark the first option that sounds good because **all** the options may be correct, and you will have to choose the best one. You should read all the options even when the question seems unfamiliar. One of them might provide you with a hint as to what the question is about.
3. If you come across a question that resists answering, cross out any options you have eliminated. Mark the question so you will be able to find it easily later and move on to the next question. Leave enough time to go back to the question you skipped.

4. Try to apply the true/false technique. To use this technique, you make a complete statement from the stem and each option, in turn. An option that results in a false statement is eliminated as a distracter. One that results in a true statement is probably the correct answer.
5. Stick to the subject matter of the course. When a multiple choice question includes options that you don't recognize or that seem out of place, don't get panicked into choosing one of them. The chances are great that the strange options are distracters.
6. Watch out for negative and extreme words. Whenever you find negative words such as **not** or **except** in the stem or in the options, circle them so they'll stand out. Then make sure you take them into consideration when you choose your answer. Always circle 100 percent words such as **never, no, none, best, worst, always, all** and **every**, and be suspicious of the options in which you find them. In fact, if you have to guess, first eliminate all the options that contain absolute words. Then choose your answer from the remaining options.
7. The option "all of the above" is usually correct. When all the reasonable candidates for options will make the statements true, test writers frequently use "all the above" as an option. One way to confirm the choice "all the above" is to find two correct answers in the options.
8. Numbers in the middle ranges are usually correct. When all the options in a question are numbers, the answer is easy if you have memorized the correct number. Otherwise, if you have no other information to go on, your chances of guessing correctly are increased if you eliminate the highest and lowest numbers. Test writers usually include at least one number lower and higher than the correct answer. You could compare the remaining options to something you know.
9. Check for look-alike options. Test makers occasionally include, in one option, two options that are alike except for one word. Such a pair seems to indicate where the test maker's interest was focused, so it is logical to assume that one of the pair is the correct answer.
10. Check for longer or more inclusive options. In multiple choice questions, the correct answer is often longer or more inclusive of qualities or ideas than the distracters. The length or inclusiveness results when the test writer must qualify or amplify a simple statement. So be alert for a tightly packed or overly long option.

### **Essay Questions**

*Your answer must demonstrate that you (1) understand the question with precision, (2) know the necessary facts and supporting materials, and (3) can apply reasoning to these materials. Your only way to demonstrate that you know your stuff is through an organized answer. The following suggestions will help you get organized.*

1. *Do not write an introduction:* Don't start your essay with an introductory paragraph or even with a high sounding sentence. Such a general approach forces you to scatter your ideas, whereas the instructor is looking for a sharp focus.
2. *Answer the question directly and forcefully in the first sentence:* Develop your essay response from a strong opening sentence. The key to a direct answer is in a partial repeat of the question itself.
3. *Expand on the first sentence:* Now all you need to do is put down ideas, facts, and details to support your first sentence. When everything you write pertains to the first sentence, you cannot help but achieve unity; everything also hangs together.
4. *Use transitions:* Transitions are often called directional words. When transitions lead from one idea to the next, the instructor finds the paper clear, logical, and refreshing.
5. *Don't save the best for last:* If your best idea is not included in your direct answer in the first few lines, your point may never become clear to the instructor.