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## Multiple Choice Exams

In order to minimize confusion and anxiety with multiple choice exams, try following a systematic approach, as outlined below.

**1. Cover the answers**

**2. Read each question or stem carefully**

It often takes more than one reading to understand a question. To help decode the question:

- underline key words;
- rephrase the question in your own words; and
- name the concept from which the question is derived.

**3. Try to answer each question before looking at the choices**

If you determine the answer before you look at the choices, you lessen the possibility of becoming confused.

**4. Uncover the answers one at a time**

Use a systematic process of elimination by putting a:

- ✓ beside the answer if you think it is correct
- X beside the answer if you think it is incorrect
- ? beside the answer if you are unsure

Generally (but not always), the choices given for multiple choice questions are:

- Distracter: an answer similar to the right answer, but incorrect
- The correct answer, if certain conditions apply
- The correct answer
- A “clearly” incorrect answer

Do not get trapped by:

- Jargon: words that sound impressive but are not the correct answer
- Familiar phrases from the course but are not the correct answer

**5. If you are unsure, go with your hunch**

Stay with your hunch unless something later in the exam leads you to a better answer. If you do not even have a hunch, guess, unless you will be penalized for doing so.

## Sample Multiple Choice Question

Which of the following study skills is most likely to result in success?

- a) Determining which chapters will be on the test
- b) Reading the headings and subheadings in your textbook while reading it
- c) Putting the textbook under your pillow the night before the exam
- d) Using the headings and subheadings in your textbook while reading it

Sample answering strategy:

Which of the following study skills is most likely to result in success?

"I can't really answer this one until I see the choices of study skills, but I know the course has constantly emphasized two principles: be active rather than passive, and choose what works for you."

- a) **X** "This would help, but not much because knowing what chapters will be on the test does not mean that you necessarily learn anything in those chapters."
- b) ? "Possible correct answer"
- c) **X** "Nobody learns by osmosis"
- d) ? "Possible correct answer"

"B and D are very similar. Simply 'reading' the headings is not as active or as powerful as 'using' the headings, so D is 'most likely' to lead to success."