

## MULTIPLE CHOICE STRATEGIES

- Cover choices & then answer the questions as if they were fill-in
- By organizing your notes into categories or mental maps, visualizing how MC questions are asked is easier
- Write questions as you study – on spare paper or the back draw or write down difficult concepts.
- In reviewing questions, look up ALL choices, that way you learn about four topics, not just one. It's just as important to know why an answer isn't right.
- Check your Scantron!!!!

### Multiple Choice or Multiple Guess!?

- Many students make the assumption that multiple choice exams are simple and do not require a rigorous approach to study.
- If you can understand how to prepare and how to approach and analyze the structure of multiple choice questions, you will have a much – clearer sense of how to take the guess work out of multiple choice exams.
- In terms of their structure, multiple choice exams have a few unsavory characteristics:
- These tests typically have many questions to answer and the topics you studied are typically scrambled and shuffled
- The ideas you learned about in class or in the text may be reworded in different ways: colloquially, technically, by example, or by analogy
- Very often the multiple choice test is not simple recognition of basic ideas but recognition of the answer to a reasoned problem.

### In-test Strategies for Multiple Choice:

**PREVIEW THE EXAM:** As you browse through, take note of those questions which seem easier (i.e., those questions you think you can answer) and perhaps plan to skip those which seem harder, setting time limits, and getting settled; keep to time divisions for questions as they are usually equally weighted

**START WITH QUESTIONS YOU CAN ANSWER READILY:** Don't waste time laboring over troublesome questions at the start. Be sure to get credit for items you know well.

**RECYCLE THROUGH THE TEST:** Now try the questions you could not do on the first attempt. Sometimes the answer will occur to you simply because you are more relaxed after having answered other questions. Sometimes, too, your answer to one question provides a clue to the answer of another.

**SET GOALS FOR TIME AND PACE YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY:** Allocate your time according to the relative worth of questions. Try to save a few minutes at the end for review and revision. **REMEMBER!** Your first answer may or may not be your best answer. Change answers, but only if you have a good reason for doing so.

**READ THE QUESTIONS CAREFULLY:** Twice if necessary. Avoid jumping to conclusions about what you think the question asks.

**CIRCLE OR UNDERLINE KEY WORDS IN QUESTIONS:** Multiple choice tests examine your ability to read carefully and thoughtfully as much as they test your ability to recall and reason. Watch for words like "all," "always," "never," "none," "few," "many," "some," "sometimes."

**TRY TO RECALL A CONCEPT FROM MEMORY:** ...or think out the answer before looking at the options. Doing this successfully may help you "wade through" the alternatives and find a reasonable answer or choice.

**CONSIDER THE COVER-UP STRATEGY:** Read the question and try to answer it by recall before looking at the alternative answers.

**CONSIDER THE TRUE/FALSE LABEL STRATEGY:** Label the alternative answers as true or false statements and then look for a pattern in the answers.

**SOMETIMES ALTERNATIVES DIFFER BY ONLY ONE OR TWO WORDS:** ...or in the order of one or two terms. These can seem very confusing. It helps sometimes to read the stem of the question (that's the question part) with an alternative while covering up the others. By methodically thinking through the alternatives this way, you may be able to make more sense of the options by labelling them true or false and eliminating those that don't correctly complete the question.

**BE PREPARED TO CHANGE YOUR ANSWER:** ONLY if you can determine a clear reason why your first response is incorrect -- many students report difficulties arising from changes that are made on the basis of nervous feelings;

**YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS FROM THE SAME SECTION OF THE COURSE** to offset the mixing of questions inherent in the design of the test -- this demands care be taken that answer sheets are correctly completed and that all questions have been answered; consider guessing when there is no penalty for a wrong answer.

**BE WARY OF DESCRIPTIVE WORDS** which are overly exclusive or overly inclusive. These absolute terms tend to portray things as right or wrong where this is often not the case. Words like always, never, completely, and only are absolutes. Relative words like often, usually, seem and may are often more accurate.

**TRANSLATE DOUBLE NEGATIVE STATEMENTS** into positive ones. Examples like "Not lacking" or "not none" become "having" and "some" and this can reduce confusion. Note that these are often partly in the stem and partly in the choices of a particular question.

**IF YOU MUST GUESS,** look for some of these possibilities: the style of an answer option is very different from all of the others - this may disqualify it; the grammar of the question stem is not in agreement with the grammar of an alternative; some alternative is not in the area or topic of the question, but comes from some other part of the course- this may disqualify it.

**OVERALL: Remember that you are looking for the best answer, not only a correct one, and not one which must be true all of the time, in all cases, and without exception.**