

OBJECTIVE TEST TAKING

Objective exams include true-false, fill-in-the-blank, matching, and multiple choice questions. The word objective refers to the scoring and indicates there is only one correct answer. Objective tests rely heavily on your skill to read quickly and to reason out the answer

Preparation

Most objective exams call for recognition learning. In other words, the right or "best" answer is given, but you must be able to recognize it. Try to learn if the items will be general or specific. General questions will require a more thorough learning than specific questions. Either way, you will probably need to spend much of your time on memory work.

General Suggestions - Read the directions for the whole test and each subsection.

- Note the number of items and figure out how much time you have to answer each one.
- Are there penalties for guessing? If not, then guess when you don't know the answer.
- Answer the easy items first to get the maximum number of points.
- Change your answer only if you have reason to do so; research indicates that in 3 out of 4 times your first choice was probably correct.
- Return to questions you couldn't answer initially and try them again.
- Don't waste time reviewing answers of which you are confident are correct.

True-False

- If there is more than one fact to the statement, check corrections of each part. If one part is false, the item is wrong unless there is a qualifying word such as usually or sometimes.
- Words like "always" and "never" tend to indicate that the statement is false, especially if you can think of an exception. "Always" and "never" are absolutes; true absolutes are rare.
- When the statement is given negatively, state the item without the "no" or "not" and see if it is true or false. If now the statement reads "true," mark it false.

Matching

- Find out if each item is used only once or if some are used more than one once.
- Check off the answers you have used already.
- Analyze the choices to see if any parts of the term or word you know will then allow you to associate it with the right answer.

Fill-in-the-Blank

- Check the number of lines per answer to see if they indicate the number of letters or words.
- If you can't remember the exact word, write something related or an explanation.
- Use appropriate endings to fit the statement/question.

Multiple-Choice

- If the question is long and complex, underline the subject and verb to help you.
- Read the question and answer it in your mind, then look for the matching answer.
- Read all the alternatives, saying "probable" or "not probable" before making a decision.
- Ask yourself if you are dealing with a fact or the understanding of some fact.
- If a question is in the negative; for example, "one of the following is not a cause," look for three true answers and the one remaining false answer will be correct one to mark.
- Note appropriate grammatical structure from the question to the alternative.
- General statements are more likely to be correct than specific statements, especially if you can think of one exception.
- In questions that have complex alternatives involving more than one right answer, mark each item as true or false. When you finish all the alternatives, you will have the answer.
- Check the answer sheet with the question sheet to make sure the numbering corresponds.

Test Wise-ness CUES (Guessing)

The following is a list of cues for selecting the correct choice or alternative on objective tests when you are not completely sure of your answers. If you make use of these cues when you are in doubt about a test, you may increase your chance of obtaining a higher test score.

1. **CUES IN THE ALTERNATIVE** – Five areas are associated with the correct alternative.
 - A. **Most General Alternatives** – The correct alternative is often the most general, since the most general alternative includes the most information. You will often find a list of items that have some very technical and specific alternatives and one alternative which is more general. Chances are, the most general alternative is the correct one. For example:

The lungs

 - A. Are solid and immobile and located within the chest.
 - B. Are the only organs that produce insulin.
 - C. Function primarily in respiration.
 - D. Possess the sphincter of Oddi.

Even if you aren't sure of the correct answer, you can see that the alternatives A, B, and D, all deal with specific facts and details about the lungs. C deals with a main feature of the lungs, respiration. Since C is more general and allows for more variability, it is correct.

- B. **Length** – The correct alternative is often the longest. If you have noticed that most of the correct answers have been the shortest, then when you aren't sure, select the shortest. If, on the other hand, most of the correct answers have been the longest, select the longest answer when you are unsure. No particular trend for either? Try the longest. For example:

$$3 + (7+1) = 3 + 7 + 1 \text{ because}$$

- A. $3 + 7 + 1 = 11$
- B. Parentheses preceded by an addition sign may be removed without changing the signs of any numbers inside the parentheses (the association law of division).
- C. Division is indicated.
- D. Parentheses preceded by a minus sign may be removed.
- E.

In this item, B is the longest and therefore is most likely correct. In this case, it is correct.

- C. **Middle Value** - the correct alternative is usually of middle value. If the alternatives range in value - old to new, early to late, big to small - and you are not sure which one is correct, eliminate the extremes and pick from the middle value or values. Example:

The mature human being has how many teeth?

- A. 15
- B. 32
- C. 54
- D. 7

Eliminate the two extreme values, C and D. Since 54 and 7 are extremes, they are probably incorrect. This leaves you with two alternatives from which to select your answer.

- D. **Two Alternatives Mean the Same** - The correct alternative is probably not one of a pair of similar statements. If two alternatives mean the same thing, and there is only one correct answer, eliminate both of them. Neither will be correct. Make your choice from those remaining. Here's an example:

The treaty of Breat Litovsk was ratified by Moscow because:

- A. Tsar Alexander I wanted to prevent Napoleon's invasion of Russia.
- B. Russia was unable to keep up with the armament manufacture of Austria.
- C. Russia could not keep pace with the military production of Austria.
- D. Nicolai Lenin wanted to get the Soviet Union out of World War I.

Since alternatives B and C have similar meanings, chose between alternatives A and D. The correct choice is D.

- E. **Two Alternatives are Opposite** - The correct alternative is probably one of a pair of direct opposites. If you notice that two alternatives have opposite meanings, one of them is probably correct. Example:

The Planarian has:

- A. An anterior brain.
- B. Three legs.
- C. Red eyes.
- D. A posterior brain.

Notice that alternatives A and D are opposite. Therefore, you would eliminate the other two alternatives are given, one of them is correct. In this item, A is the correct response.

Summary - When you are given a list of alternatives and are not sure which is correct, look for the degree of generalization, the length, middle value, and similarities of opposites in the statements. Select the most general answer instead of a specific. Choose either the longest or shortest alternative depending on the trend seen in the rest of the test. If you have noticed no trend, select the longest alternative. Eliminate the extreme value, and choose the alternative with a middle value. Also, if you find two alternatives with the same meaning, eliminate both of them. If you find two alternatives with opposite meanings, choose one of them.

2. **CUES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STEMS AND ALTERNATIVES**

The next groups of cues are found in both the stem and the alternatives. In this group are factors within the stem of the item, which will help you to choose the correct alternative.

- A. **Grammatical Agreement of *a* and *an*** - In a test item, the correct alternative should agree grammatically with the stem. For example, a stem ending with the word “an” calls for a response beginning with the letters a, e, i, o, or u. A stem ending with the word “a” calls for an alternative beginning with any other letter. Example:

A biologist who specializes in the study of the relationships of an organism to its environment is known as an:

- A. Ecologist
- B. Structuralist
- C. Taxonomist
- D. Naturalist

- B. **Singular and Plurals** - If the stem uses the word is, then the correct alternative will be a singular word. If the stem has the word are, find an alternative with a plural, or a word which means more than one object. For example:

Important in feeling pain are:

- A. Bone
- B. Ear
- C. Muscle
- D. Nerves

Since the stem calls for a plural answer (notice the word are in the stem), the correct alternative must be a plural. The only possibility is nerves. Even if you weren't sure of the answer, you could choose D, the only plural, and you would be correct.

Bibliography

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