

## Testing



Tests are given to find out what students know. To be successful on any test, students must know what will be tested. Suggestions for preparing for a test include developing strategies to *review content* as well as to *practice various formats* of test questions.

### Review strategies include

- predicting what questions will be asked. Students look over notes or assignments or talk with classmates. They should think about the information that the teacher emphasized or wrote on the chalkboard or overhead projector. The questions, people, concepts, etc., that are covered in class assignments generally are the things that are tested. Students can make a list of the important facts and concepts that might be tested.
- taking notes carefully if there is a test review. Students should note teacher comments, like “This will be on the test,” “These are the important people you should know,” or “Remember these two points.”
- completing any test review sheet that the teacher might provide. The review sheet can be used as a practice test, or a practice test could be constructed using the review sheet as a guide.
- devising methods to study for the test, e.g.,
  - ◆ make a set of flash cards. A flash card could have a name, date, event, place, vocabulary word, or question on one side of the card. On the other side, students should write the answer or some information to describe what is listed on the front side of the card.
  - ◆ make an outline of the information that includes major headings, people, events, dates, etc.
  - ◆ use memory strategies such as mnemonics or graphic organizers, e.g., concept diagrams, cause/effect charts, Venn diagrams, maps, or timelines to organize information.
  - ◆ recite the information. Some students are auditory learners and hearing the content helps them to remember.
  - ◆ find a study buddy. Students can study with a friend or group of friends. They can make practice tests for each other or orally ask one another questions.

### Test formats include

- true or false,
- matching,
- multiple choice,
- fill-in-the-blanks (completion), and
- essay.

**To Teach** students methods to use to review for tests use Graphic Organizer 27, which gives the directions for making and using flash cards. You may want to make a transparency of the graphic to use as you lead a discussion of how to complete the strategy, using the steps in the left column.

1. Tell students there are a number of activities they can use when reviewing for a test. For this particular strategy, tell them you are going to help them make a set of flash cards and learn how to use them to study for a test.
2. Run Graphic Organizer 27 on heavy card stock and give each student one sheet for every 10 cards that he or she is to make.
3. Have students review the content on which they are to be tested.
4. Ask them to write down any facts or ideas that they do not know.
5. Have them write a question for each fact or idea that they identified.
6. Have them transfer their questions to their flash cards, writing the question on one side of the card and the answer to that question on the other side of the card.
7. Have students, in pairs or groups, ask one another the questions each wrote.
8. As a variation, you may run the template on different colors of paper. Then give each student in a group a different color for his or her flash cards. This makes it easier for each student to identify her or his questions when they are returned to the owner at the end of the practice.

## Flash Cards

**Directions:** Use the following template to create flash cards. Run the template on heavy card stock and then have students write the questions on one side, cut the cards out, and then write the answer on the back of each question.


**To apply** the strategy, have students review a chapter in the textbook by making a set of flash cards.

**To extend** their knowledge of review strategies, have students

- use the graphic organizers in this book to review information. For example, if they are comparing/contrasting, use Graphic Organizers 11 and 12. If they are finding cause/effect, use Graphic Organizer 13 or 14.
- create a review sheet by outlining the information in the textbook.

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**To Teach** students how to analyze different formats of test questions, use Selections 23-27. You may want to make a transparency of each selection to use when you lead a discussion of what to look for in each test format. You may also want to make transparencies of Graphic Organizers 28 and 29 to use to teach students to analyze how to “read” and answer essay and multiple choice test questions.

**Selection 23 - True and False Questions**

The best way to study for true and false questions is to commit facts to memory. Some suggestions for analyzing this type of question follow.

- Read the entire statement. If there is more than one fact in the statement, check the validity of all the facts. If one is false, the item is false.
- When the statement contains a negative word (*no, not, cannot, does not*), it can be confusing and may be either true or false. The best way to check such a statement is to remove the word *no* or *not* and then reread the sentence. If the statement is true when the negative word is removed, then the answer to that particular question is false.
- The use of certain qualifying words, such as *sometimes, often, seldom, frequently, ordinarily, generally, usually, probably, might, may, and many*, tends to make a statement true. To be false, a statement must be completely untrue. When you read a statement that has a qualifying word, see if you can think of another example to support it. If you can, the statement is true.
- When the statement contains a double negative, it is generally true. For example, if a statement says that something is “not unusual,” it is really saying that something is usual. *Usual* is one of those words that tend to make a statement true.
- Absolute words, such as *never, none, always, every, entirely, only, all, worst, and best*, most generally make a statement false. To be true, the statement must be 100 percent true. If you see a statement with any of these words, try to think of an exception to what it is saying. If you can do this, you know the statement is false.

## Selection 24 - Matching

Matching questions require students to correctly identify or “match” relationships between paired lists of information. The best way to prepare for these questions is to study the relationships between information, for example, the relationship between a person and what he or she did or the relationship between a cause and its result. When taking a matching test, consider the following:

- Find out if an answer can be used more than once.
- Examine both lists to determine the types of items as well as the relationships that are included, for example, places and locations, people and their accomplishments, events and dates.
- Choose one column as your starting point (usually the second column — the one containing the “answers”). Read the first item in the second column and then look through the first column to find an item that matches it. Always starting in the same column will organize your thinking. This process will also help you use your time more efficiently because, once you read through the first column several times while looking for matches, you will become familiar with the whole list, enabling you to find matches more quickly as you read each item in the second column.
- Go through the whole list in the first column before deciding on a match for the first item in the second column. Don’t choose the first item that is mostly likely the correct response. There may be a better answer, which you will miss if you do not read all the choices.
- If the lists contain mixed information, such as people, places, and vocabulary, choose an answer that shows a correct relationship. For example, a person would not be an appropriate match for a body of water or a definition of a term.
- Cross off each item when you make a match. This will help you stay organized and you will not make the careless error of using an item that has already been used.
- Don’t guess until you have made all the matches that you are sure are correct. If you guess early, you may eliminate an answer that should be used later.

## Selection 25 - Completion

The term *constructed response* refers to several types of questions, including fill-in-the-blank, completion, and short answer. These questions require students to write a short response instead of choosing an answer from selected choices. When answering these types of questions, look at a prompt, which asks you to do something. Then, construct your own answer to the prompt. Some questions require a one-word answer, while others may require brief phrases or a short paragraph. Because there may not be an exact answer to the prompt, students' answers will often vary. When this happens, the question may be scored by a rubric. When taking this type of test, you should:

- Read each statement carefully for clues about what information is called for – a name, a place, a list of causes, examples of something.
- Focus on how the statement/question is written. If the statement requires you to fill in a blank, look for words like *a* or *an* before the blank. If *an* appears before the blank, the word in the blank begins with a vowel.
- Look for key words in the statement/question. These words will direct your thinking and help you to provide a reasonable answer.
- If you can't remember the exact word(s) that goes in the blank(s), write something related. Teachers generally give partial or even full credit if the answer means the same thing.
- Check the number of blanks or lines provided to record your answer. If there is one short blank, generally the answer calls for one short word. If there are several lines or spaces, sometimes separated by commas, that is a clue that you need to provide as many answers as there are number of lines. If you leave some lines or spaces blank, then you are only partially answering the question.
- If the question asks you to do more than one thing, be sure to provide all the information called for. For example, if the question asks you to *list* reasons for the American Revolution and *identify* the most important, be certain that you address both parts.
- Write legibly. You are not selecting a letter (A, B, C, or D) or writing *True* or *False*. To get credit, the teacher must be able to determine what you mean.

## Selection 26 - Essay Questions

Essay questions are often referred to as extended response questions. These questions are similar to the short answer format, except they are generally more complex. The following steps will help you answer essay questions:

**BEFORE** starting to write an essay test,

- Determine if you must answer all the questions or if you have some choice.
- Note how much time you have for the test.
- Budget the amount of time you can spend on each question.
- Prioritize the questions if some are worth more points than others.

**WHEN** you start the test,

- Read the question(s) carefully to determine what is being asked. It is important that you know the definition of some of the most common directive words –
  - ◆ *Compare* identifying similarities between two or more things
  - ◆ *Contrast* identifying differences between two or more things
  - ◆ *Discuss* consider pros and cons or describe similarities and differences
  - ◆ *Analyze* break something down into parts and discuss or interpret data
  - ◆ *Illustrate* give examples
  - ◆ *Summarize* give a brief account, list or enumerate
  - ◆ *Trace* show the order of events
  - ◆ *List* enumerate
- Plan your answer. This may take some time but it will enable you to write a better essay.
- Use pre-writing skills, such as brain storming, jotting down ideas and concepts, making an outline, or using other graphic organizers listing main ideas and supporting details.
- Use the rules of good composition as you write.
- Rephrase the question in your first paragraph
- Identify main points in the first paragraph.
- Develop each key point in subsequent paragraphs, providing supporting details.
- Use transitions to tie the paragraphs together.
- Summarize in the last paragraph.
- Write legibly.

## Planning an Essay Answer

The following graphic organizer may help you become a better essay writer. Use what you have learned to analyze and write the following essay question.

What is the question I am asked to answer?

Decide what you are to do by reading and defining the directive word(s).

Brainstorm possible ideas to include in the answer.

Use a graphic organizer to structure your answer.

Write your answer on the back of this paper, making sure you use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Remember to write legibly.

## Selection 27 - Multiple Choice

Questions that have a multiple choice format are also referred to as selected response questions. These questions, the most common format found on standardized tests, provide a set of choices — one of which is the correct answer. Multiple choice questions usually contain a phrase or stem followed by 3-5 choices (selections). Multiple choice formats may ask a student to answer a question or complete a statement. When answering multiple choice questions, consider the following suggestions:

- Read the question before looking at the answers. If you have an answer, check to see if it is one of the choices. If it is, mark the answer sheet and go on to the next question.
- If your answer is not one of the choices, discard it and look carefully at the selected responses from which you can choose. Put a mark through choices that are clearly incorrect.
- Identify key words in the stem and selected responses. Check the relationship of the words.
- Locate the verb in the stem. Determine what the verb is asking you to do.
- Note words like *always*, *none*, and *never*. If a choice includes one of these words, it is probably not the correct answer.
- Note words like *often*, *frequently*, and *usually*. If a choice includes one of these words, it is likely to be the correct selection.
- Examine each answer to see how precisely it is written. A precise answer is often the correct one.
- Look carefully if the choices contain a range of numbers. Generally, numbers that are extreme (such as the largest or the smallest, the oldest or the most recent) are incorrect. Choose a number in the middle range.
- Don't second guess yourself. Generally, your first choice is best.
- Note the use of "All of the above" as a selection. If you know that at least two of the choices are correct, then "All of the above" is probably the correct choice.
- Look at the length of the answer. One choice that is clearly longer and more descriptive than the others is probably the correct choice.
- Watch for negative words in the stem. Negative words generally ask you to choose an answer that is not true. When examining a question that contains a negative word, try to find three answers that are correct. This process helps you to narrow down your choices.
- Look at the grammar in the stem. If there is a word like *a* or *an*, you should select a response that begins with a vowel.
- Note similar choices. If two choices are similar, one of them is probably the correct answer. However, if there are two choices that essentially mean the same thing, neither answer is likely to be the correct choice.
- Note selected responses that are complete opposites. Generally, one of the responses is the correct answer.
- Note complex questions. If a question has complex choices, mark each item true or false. This will help you narrow your choices before deciding on the correct answer.

## Graphic Organizer 29

Use the following graphic organizer to analyze a selected response (multiple choice) question. Remember, you should read the sample question and, without looking at the selected responses, answer the question. Check to see if your answer is one of the choices. If it is one of the choices, you would normally mark the answer and move on to the next. **For practice, assume that your answer is not one of the choices. Refer to the list of clues to help you complete the analysis.**

What is the stem of the question?

Identify key words:

Locate the verb:

Decide what action the verb requires:

Eliminate any choices you know are incorrect:

List the remaining choices:

Make your choice:

Why did you choose that option?