

HAMPTON UNIVERSITY STUDENT COUNSELING CENTER TEST TAKING TIPS: RESPONSE PATTERNS AND EDUCATED GUESSING

FIVE TYPICAL RESPONSE PATTERNS TO TEST QUESTIONS

Our response patterns are based on the degree to which we know the course material and convert the knowledge to answers:

1. Immediate (everybody's favorite): the question automatically triggers associations and the information from long-term memory (most of us have to study and work with the material in order to get it into long-term memory). Write the answer AND LEAVE IT ALONE!!! Don't go back later, get all nervous, second guess, change and get it wrong.
2. Delayed: you are not sure of the answer, so you should read it again. Find the key words then scan your memory for any links or associations. Awesome if you hit on the answer, but if you're still unsure, skip the question, and return to it after you have made all the immediate responses you can.
3. Assisted: you return to the unanswered questions and can use the rest of the test – frequently there is information embedded in questions that either trigger your memory or flat out provide an answer.
4. Randomly filling in the scantron bubbles. Really?! Sooo random.
5. Educated guessing improves your odds of guessing correctly.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR EDUCATED GUESSING

The following hints can (are not guaranteed to) assist you to give correct answers to questions you don't know. They are **not substitutes for** giving sufficient, high quality, undistracted time and effort to **class attendance and participation, study and test preparation**.

CAUTION: It takes way more time to make educated guesses than quickly, easily and happily writing down those correct answers that you know because you loved yourself enough to be ready to succeed.

True-False Questions:

There probably are more true than false answers simply because false answers are more difficult to create.

1. Guess **true** if there is an in-between modifier:
 - In-between modifiers (in contrast to 100% modifiers) make room for exceptions, or for the statement to sometimes apply and sometimes not apply.
 - i. Examples of in-between modifiers: some, most, a few, sometimes, often, usually, may, seldom, frequently, few, better, or any adjective that ends in *er*, which means "more"(i.e. larger)

2. Guess **false** if there is a 100% modifier:
 - 100-percent modifiers are the absolutes, meaning that they are the extremes and no exceptions are allowed.
 - Few things happen, or exist without exceptions.
 - i. Examples of modifiers: all, every, only, always, absolutely, everyone, everybody, best, none, never, no one, nobody, worst, least, fewest, or any adjective that ends in *est*, which means “the most” (i.e. largest)

3. Guess **false** if there is a relationship clue:
 - Two common kinds of relationship questions on tests are cause/effect and explanation through reason.
 - i. Common relationship clues: because, since, so, cause, effect or reason
Ex: Cramming is not recommended because it uses only eight of the twelve principles of memory.

4. Guess **false** if the statement is ridiculous, foolish, insulting, or has unfamiliar terms.
 - Statements that are meant to be humorous, ridiculous, or unreasonable, should be marked false for true-false questions. (In multiple-choice questions they are distracters, so don't choose those options as answers.)
 - If you have attended class regularly and have done all of the reading, when a question contains unfamiliar terms, odds are in your favor that the statement is false.

5. Guess **true**, the wild-shot guess if there are no other clues in a true-false question.
 - If there are no modifiers to use and there is no relationship shown, you will need to take a wild-shot guess.
 - If you run out of time on a test and simply must guess, guess true.
 - Teachers tend to write more true statements than false statements.

Multiple-Choice Questions

Generally, multiple-choice questions require you to recall specific items of information, or to recognize information by separating it from similar choices. **CRUCIAL: read the stem carefully and immediately eliminate all possible incorrect distracters.** For educated guessing consider the following:

1. If there are numbers as options, Treat the highest and lowest numbers as distracters, and eliminate them as possible correct answers.
 - You stand a better chance of selecting the correct answer if you pick an option which falls in the middle range.

2. If there are multiple-choice options that are almost identical (look alike), choose one of those:
 - When two options look almost the same, chances are the correct answer is one of them.

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- When trying to distinguish between the two options, try restructuring the multiple-choice question into a true-false format to determine which option is true.
3. If one multiple-choice option is longer in length or more inclusive in content, choose it
 - Sometimes more words are needed to give complete information to make a correct answer.
 - An answer that covers a wider range of possibilities is more likely correct.
 - Sometimes two or three answers may be correct to some degree, but one answer contains more information or a broader idea. In such cases the correct answer is more inclusive.
 4. If the last option is “all of the above” and this option is not used elsewhere, choose it.
 - If you know for sure that two options are correct, but you are not sure about the third option and the fourth option is “all of the above,” choose it.
 - If you are not sure if two answers are correct, you have turned each option into a true-false question, and still do not know the answer, choose “all of the above” if it is not used throughout the test.
 5. Guess “c,” the wild-shot guess, if there are no other clues in a multiple-choice question.
 - Option A is not used as often because many students would stop reading the questions and stop thinking about the answer if the correct answer was given first.
 - Option B is not used as often for the same reason A is not.
 - Option C seems to hide the answer best and force the reader to read through more of the options.
 - Option D seems too visible because it is on the last line.

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