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STRATEGIES FOR ANSWERING DIFFERENT TYPES OF TEST QUESTIONS

Often, you go into a test and are not sure what types of questions will be asked, and sometimes, the exam can consist of different types of questions, making it even more difficult to be fully prepared. With a variety of choices, instructors like to challenge their students. Below are a few tips that will help you meet that challenge when it comes to test time.

Essay

This type of question is usually the most time-consuming because you have to ensure that you have enough time to answer each question or subquestion. Whether you have to choose from one or an assortment of essay questions, quickly read through the questions and decide which one(s) you will answer before planning your approach. Your opening statement, or introduction, should state your case for what you want to say. The bulk of the essay will be in the three or more paragraphs in the body of the essay where you use quotes or examples to clarify your points. The last paragraph should concisely state your conclusion. Keep track of the time and of your progress.

Make an outline prior to composing the essay. Organize your main points and subpoints, and monitor your progress while writing the essay. This process will keep your thoughts concise and well-developed, preventing rambling or running out of time. You may not think you have time to devote to creating an outline, but it will save you time in the long run.

Fill in the Blank

Make your answers short and to the point by using the knowledge you have to complete the sentence or to fill in the answer. Don't leave anything blank. If you aren't sure or don't know the answer, guess.

Multiple Choice

Read each question carefully and try to answer it without looking at the choices. Your first instinct is usually right. Don't overanalyze, but be sure to read each answer because many times they can be very similar and can trick you if you are too hasty. A good rule of thumb is that when a question uses words like "always," "never," "none" or "all," the statement is usually incorrect. Conversely, those statements that use words such as "most," "rarely," "often," or "sometimes" are often correct.

Open Book

This type of test can be the most challenging because you think it will be easy. Use Post-Its, underline, or highlight chapters in the table of contents, and use separate papers to keep definitions or other formulas handy (if the test is also open note). Be sure to prepare fully for an open book test just as you would for a non-open book test. There will not be enough time to look up and learn all the information during the test. You must understand the content and know where to quickly find the details you cannot memorize.

True or False

All parts of a statement must be true for the statement to be true, but any part of a statement may be false for it to be false. Words such as "always" or "never" are usually false, and the words "sometimes" or "often" are usually true.

For additional assistance with test-taking strategies, visit the Ranken Student Success Center.