

Tips for Taking Multiple Choice Tests

Scoopmire- APUSH

PART A- STUDYING

1. Organize the material in your head as you learn it:

Learning Process:

1. What do I already know about this topic?
2. What is the BIG PICTURE?
3. What are the typical test item questions?
 - What is the definition of this?
 - What is an example of this?
 - What are the different types of this?
 - What is this related to?
 - How is this significant?
 - What else is this like?
 - What caused this/ What happened because of this?
 - Who did this?
 - Why/When did this happen?

2. Take good class notes, and study them carefully! BOIL IT DOWN TO THE ESSENCE!

Before the test, paraphrase and summarize your material. Make flash cards of the specific terms, which are lower level thinking (basic recall) items. Organize your information according to topic or time period, in the case of history class. Make a picture mentally, if you can.

Create a hook for remembering the information: When you are 18, you can't drink legally--the 18th Amendment outlawed alcohol sales and consumption in the US. When you are 21, you can legally drink--the 21st Amendment legalized the sale and consumption of alcohol again.

Fit this new knowledge into the framework of previous knowledge. Ask yourself: How does this relate to what I already know?

3. Space out your study time.

Say you've got 2 hours to study for a test. It is better to study for thirty minutes in the four days prior to the test than for two hours in a row. For the AP Test, you need to start studying weeks before the actual test.

4. Eliminate distractions.

Turn off the cell phone, the TV, Facebook, etc. PUT THE CELL PHONE IN ANOTHER ROOM! Concentrate on the task at hand and really devote yourself to it. It is better to study for twenty minutes with concentration than to spend two hours watching Jersey Shore with the book open in

front of you. Be honest—you haven't studied at all at the end of those two hours, but you have become an expert on how dumb Snooki really is.

5. Familiarity breeds huge gaps of knowledge.

Have someone else choose practice questions for you—you can do this online by using AP review sites, or you can have someone else quiz you. If you choose the items to study you will gravitate towards material you are familiar with. You can't study what you do not know that you don't know.

6. Study in simulated test conditions. REHEARSE!

Early on in your preparation, study by yourself. Later on, study with a partner or a group. During that time, you should be quizzing each other and discussing the reason why you chose certain answers on practice items. Right before the test, give yourself some simulated questions that your study partners have chosen (see 5) and then check them for accuracy.

7. Study backwards.

Study the latest material you covered first, and study the earliest material you studied right before the exam. Make sure you provide MORE TIME for the older material than you provided for the new material.

8. GET ENOUGH REST, AND LAY OFF THE RED BULLS AND FRAPPACHINOS!

PART B- THE TEST

1. Do NOT psych yourself out.

If you believe you have a mental block on multiple-choice tests, you will certainly have that mental block. If you believe you are going to fail, you have just made that very thing much more likely. Panic actually bathes your brain in chemicals that slow or halt its functioning. Breathing brings oxygen to your brain. So BREATHE!

2. Look over the test and pace yourself.

If there are 15 items on a math test, and you are given 90 minutes to do them, you obviously have roughly 6 minutes per item. Look over the test, and do the easy ones first. This will not only now make the test size more manageable in your mind, it will also boost your confidence and help you manage time better. If you can, give yourself a few seconds' break within the test time to take a breath and refocus.

Try to leave time for review before the test period is up. Give yourself a brief 15 second break where you clear your mind and think of something relaxing before you do this to clear your head.

3. Read each question thoroughly.

Read the question BEFORE you look at the answers. Come up with the answer in your head, and THEN look at the choices.

Look for key words such as NOT, ALWAYS, EXCEPT, ALL OF THE FOLLOWING... BUT, etc. They may not be capitalized, so make sure you slow your eyes down. Underline them or circle them so that you notice them.

4. Read each choice carefully.

Do not operate by instinct. You will overlook key words or get caught by a distractor or a partially right answer.

Read each choice. Did you find the obvious right answer? GREAT! If not, make sure the answer you choose answers the complete question, especially if you get down to one of two possible right answers.

5. Pretend that each choice is a true or false statement, and choose the statement that is most true.

Rephrase the question with the answer you chose as a statement. Ask yourself: is this true?

6. Use your knowledge of vocabulary to eliminate wrong answers.

If a question is asking about water, and you know hydro- is the Greek root for water used in a possible answer, that may very well lead you to the correct answer.

7. Remember, the right answer is there!

Eliminate the obviously wrong answers. If you don't see it, and you have prepared completely, then you are probably misreading either the prompt or the choices. Reread.

Eliminate obviously wrong answers. These are called "distractors" for a reason.

8. Most multiple choice questions involve either simple recall, cause/effect, or comparison.

9. Do not change your first answer unless you discover that you have misread or misunderstood a question.

10. Guess rather than leave an item blank.

There is no penalty for guessing on my tests, but a blank is a wrong answer without question.

11. If you see "all of the above" as an option, check to see if you can find two answers you are certain that are right. If no, all of the above is the answer, or your teacher has screwed up.

