

Test-Taking Skills

I. General Skills

A. Following directions

1. Understands lengthy directions to test battery and to individual subtests
2. Follows the restrictions of time limits and penalties for such actions as guessing, as specified in the directions.
3. Asks for clarification when directions are not fully understood.
4. Learns how to answer test items through the use of sample items.

B. Recording answers

1. Records responses in test booklet in the designated manner.
2. Follows order and direction of answer spaces on response sheet as they correspond to test items.
3. Completes responses in answer spaces quickly and accurately.

C. Using time efficiently

1. Allocates an appropriate amount of time for each test item.
2. Answers first those items that can be answered quickly; delays answering those needing more time.
3. Checks answers and completes omitted items if there is time.

D. Taking risks (guessing)

1. Guesses when not sure of correct alternative, provided there is no severe penalty for guessing.
2. Knows that empty answer spaces are automatically counted as incorrect and that a reasonable guess is better than not answering.
3. Does not choose the *Don't know* alternative, if it appears, because this is scored as an incorrect response.

E. Miscellaneous

1. Feels free to change answer, based on further deliberation.
2. Reads all answer choices before choosing "best" answer.
3. Attends to own performance and not to that of fellow test takers.

II. Skills for answering multiple choice items.

A. General items.

1. Can identify and eliminate responses with the same meaning.
2. Eliminates responses containing specific determiners, such as *all*, *always*, or *never*.

3. Is aware that grammatical clues in the question stem may disqualify alternative responses or be clues to the correct responses.
 4. Is aware that the longest answer choice among a set may be the correct one.
 5. Understands that an answer choice may be correct if it contains words or phrases similar to those in the question stem.
 6. Knows that answer choices that overlap in meaning may indicate that the truth of one choice implies the correctness of others.
 7. Knows that the answer to one item might be found in information of other items that have come before or will follow.
 8. Realizes that the above seven skills are strategies based upon the faulty construction of multiple choice items, and that most published tests avoid them when possible (see Millman, Bishop, and Ebel, 1965, for discussion of these strategies).
- B. Reading vocabulary items
1. Can choose an answer that is synonymous with, or is the opposite of, a word that is:
 - (a) underlined in sentence context,
 - (b) in bold type in sentence context,
 - (c) presented in isolation
 2. Can match a stimulus word or phrase with one of several illustrations.
- C. Reading comprehension items.
1. Reads questions and answers before reading the corresponding passage.
 2. Does not try to learn the content of a passage but scans it for answers to accompanying questions.
 3. Answers questions based only on information given, not upon general knowledge.
 4. Knows that there can be a direct correspondence between order of questions following a passage and where the answers can be found in the passage.
 5. Uses flexible rate when reading and when searching for answers in a passage.

Taken from "Test-taking skills for standardized tests of reading," Oran Stewart & Dan S. Green, The Reading Teacher, March, 1983.