

Tips for Multiple Choice Math Questions

- First, do not assume that math multiple choice tests are easier than free response tests. They take the same test preparation as any other type.
- Read the instructions before you begin answering any questions.
- When you get your test, write down any rules or formulas on a corner of your paper. This way, when you are in the middle of the test you can always look back at the formula.
- Scan the test and look for problems you had expected to be on it. Do the easiest problems first.
- Read the instructions for each problem carefully.
- Make sure you understand what you are being asked and, in particular, look out for the word “not” in the question.
- Work the problem before you look at the given alternatives! Once you have your answer, look for it. If you do this, the given choices on the test won't throw you off or “mislead” you. Instructors generally include the most common wrong answers as possible choices.
- Read all the alternatives before choosing your answer; some alternatives may look very similar (examples: 863.753 versus 8637.53). So, make sure you read through every alternative, even if you think the first or second choice is the correct one.
- If your answer does not match any of the choices, read the question again, recopy the numbers, and try solving it one more time.
- If the question asks you something you are not too sure about, try to eliminate answers you know are incorrect. As you go through each alternative, cross through the ones that you know are wrong. If you have four possible answers and you can eliminate two, you have increased your odds for a correct answer to 50%.
- Make estimates for your answers and see if they are reasonable. For example, if you are asked to answer “50 times $9 = x$ ” you could expect that x is a number close to 500, but if you end up with an answer around 5000, you'll know you did something wrong.
- Does your answer fit the question? For each problem, make sure you answer the question asked. For example, if there are 2 variables, let's say, x and y , are they asking you to find the value of x or y ?
- What if two given alternatives seem correct? If you think there is a trick question, think again. Your math instructor in this course would never write a question intended to be deceptive. If you believe that a question is tricky, make sure you are not reading too much into the question. Take your time and just follow through; apply what you have studied.
- Try taking a few breaks during the test. Stop for a moment, shut your eyes and take some deep

breaths. Sometimes clearing your head in this way can help you stay fresh during the completion of the test (two or three 10-second breaks could be helpful).

- Look for careless mistakes such as making sure the decimal is in the right place, that you have the correct number sign, that you read the directions accurately, that you copied the numbers correctly, and so on.
- Try not to keep on changing your answer. If you have worked out the math problem and you are sure of your answer, choose it, unless you are very uncertain about your first answer choice, have misread the question, or made a silly mistake.
- Don't spend too much time on a problem. If you are stuck, move on to the next question. If you skip some questions, before you turn in your test go back and see if you can answer them now. Take as much time as you have and need. Make sure you have answered every question.
- If you feel like guessing, and there is no guessing penalty, always take an educated guess before you select an answer. Do not just guess randomly.
- Once you finish answering all the questions, check over your test and, if you have time, redo the problems on a separate piece of paper and see if you get the same answer the second time around. Double check your answers; just because your answer happens to be a choice it does not mean that you are correct.
- If you are allowed to use a calculator, be sure it is working on test day and, if possible, bring additional batteries.
- A point to remember...cheating can have ugly consequences!
- Be confident! If you studied your math lessons with dedication, did all your homework problems and completed any assigned handouts or worksheets, you should do well. Get a good night's sleep before test day and trust your knowledge!
- Think positive!