



Task Title: How to Write Multiple-Choice Exams

OALCF Cover Sheet – Learner Copy

Learner Name: _____

Date Started: _____

Date Completed: _____

Successful Completion: Yes No

Goal Path: Employment Apprenticeship

Secondary School Post Secondary Independence

Task Description: The learner will read an article about writing multiple-choice exams and then answer multiple-choice questions to demonstrate understanding.

Main Competency/Task Group/Level Indicator:

- Find and Use Information/Read continuous text/A1.2

Materials Required:

- Pen/pencil and paper and/or digital device

Learner Information

Many high school, College and University classes have multiple-choice exams. When apprentices take their Certificate of Qualification exam, they write multiple-choice exams. It is important to become familiar with that kind of testing process.

Read "How to Write Multiple-Choice Exams".

How to Write Multiple-Choice Exams by Apprenticeship Manitoba

There are three approaches to writing multiple-choice exams:

1. Begin with the first question and do not stop until you are done, regardless of the difficulty level of the question.
2. Answer the easy questions first, then go back and work out the difficult ones.
3. Answer the difficult questions first, then go back and do the easy ones.

It is important to note that none of these 3 approaches is inherently right or wrong. Each approach may be of value to different individuals.

The first approach appears to be the quickest because you do not have to scan all the test questions to locate the easy or difficult ones. Providing you do not spend too much time on a single question, this is most likely the quickest approach.

The second approach is useful because the more questions you answer in a row, the more confident you will be when it comes time to answer the difficult ones.

The third approach suggests it is best to do the most difficult questions first and then the easier ones. If time is running out, it will be easier to answer the easy questions in the limited time available. By the end of an exam your mind may not be as focused as it was in the beginning, so answering the questions that require the most interpretation and analysis makes sense in this scenario. Consider in advance which approach works best for you.

Helpful Tips for Writing Multiple-Choice Exams

1. Read each question fully and completely while covering the answers. You may already know the answer and will not be distracted by the answers (a, b, c, d). Do not go against your first impulse unless you are sure you are wrong.
2. If you are not absolutely sure of the answer, read every answer before you select one. Well-constructed certification exam questions will have plausible responses. Be careful not to be fooled by the first response because that may tempt you to answer before you have considered the other answers.

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3. Be careful not to read too much into a question. It is best not to try and second guess the test writer by looking for patterns or trick questions, such as always answering (c). Test writers are aware of this and design tests accordingly.
4. Lightly underline key words or phrases to isolate what the question is asking. Exam questions should contain one central problem.
5. A positive answer is more likely to be correct than a negative one.
6. If two possible answers are similar, the answer is probably neither of them.
7. If two possible answers are opposite, one of them is probably correct.
8. Check for negatives and other words that are intended to make you think carefully. Exams generally avoid negatives and bold them when they do use them.
9. The answer is usually wrong if it contains the words "all," "always," "never" or "none." Exam questions generally avoid using these specific determiners.
10. The longest or most complicated answer is often correct because the test writer is forced to add qualifying phrases to ensure the answer is clear and accurate.
11. Pay close attention to words like the "best" and "preferred" practice. There are many ways to complete a task on-the-job and taking short-cuts is common. The way you complete a task may be an industry practice, but is it the "best" way to perform the task?

Source: Trade Qualifications Learning Supports Apprenticeship Manitoba

Work Sheet

Task 1: How many approaches to writing multiple-choice exams are described in the article?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Task 2: When writing a multiple-choice exam what should you do?

- Cover up the whole question and only read one word at a time
- Read the question out loud
- Read each question fully while covering up the answer to avoid being distracted by the answers
- Skim the questions and guess at the answer

Task 3: Which of the following group of words can indicate the answer choice in a multiple-choice exam is wrong?

- Always, sometimes, all the time, once in awhile
- All, always, never, none
- Likely, sometimes, sort of, possibly
- Some of the time, likely, possibly, definitely

Task 4: Which kind of answers are often correct?

- Short and precise**
- Follow patterns**
- “c”**
- Longest or most complicated**

Task 5: Why should you pay close attention to words like “best” and “preferred” practice?

- There is no such thing as a “best” or “preferred” practice**
- Taking short cuts is common on the job**
- The way you complete a task may be an industry practice, but it may not be the best way**
- The quickest way to complete a task should always be the first choice.**