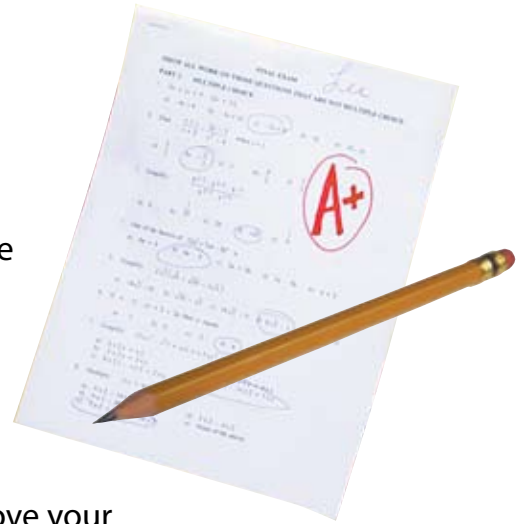


# The Most Common Types of Test Questions (and How to Handle Them)

Tests are a big part of school life. And because test grades determine overall grades, they can have a big impact. Being well prepared and knowing what to expect on a test will help you do your best. This guide explains common types of test questions. It offers strategies for answering each type.



## Strategies that Apply to Any Test

Knowing a few general strategies will help you improve your performance on any test. Try these out:

- Listen to and/or read all the instructions carefully. Be sure you know where and how to answer each question or part.
- Before you start the test, look the whole thing over. Plan your time and then pace yourself while you are working.
- Answer the questions you're sure of first.
- Underline key words in instructions and questions to help you focus your attention and your responses.
- Read over your answers. Look for and correct mistakes before handing in the test.
- Use all the time you are given to take the test.

## Multiple-Choice Items

Multiple-choice items include a set of responses. For each question, you must choose the *best* response.

Here are some strategies for completing multiple-choice tests:

- Read through all the questions and choices first. Answer the ones you are sure of. Mark the questions you are unsure of. Come back to them at the end.

- Read each question. If you know an answer, state it silently to yourself before looking at the choices. Read the choices and mark the one that best matches your answer.
- Read a question and its choices. Decide which choice is the best. Sometimes one choice will have part of the answer and another choice will have the entire answer. Choose the one that answers the question completely.
- Be careful when choices include “none of the above” or “all of the above.” If “none of the above” is the correct answer, *none* of the other choices answer the question correctly. If “all of the above” is the correct answer, all of the other choices answer the question correctly.
- If you don’t know an answer, eliminate the choices you’re sure are wrong. Choose one of the remaining ones.
- If you don’t know an answer, re-read the question with each of the choices to see which answer sounds right.
- As you read through all the multiple-choice items, look for clues that may help you to answer the items you’re unsure of.
- If, after using one or more strategies, you still don’t know which answer is correct, take a guess. Answer every multiple-choice item!

### **True/False Items**

With true/false items, you are given a sentence to read, and you must decide whether the sentence is true or false.

Follow these tips:

- Your first response is usually correct (unless you misread the statement). Go with your first reaction.
- Notice words like *always* and *never*. Few things are always true. Few things are never true. Unless you know for sure, mark statements with these words false.
- If you don’t know the correct answer, guess. Answer every true/false item.

## **Fill-in-the-Blank**

Fill-in-the-blank items are sentences with key words missing. You must fill in the missing word or phrase. You may be given a list of answer words to choose from.

Try these strategies:

- Read the item out loud. Say “blank” where something is missing. Listen to how it sounds. Then think of a word or phrase—or find an item in the list—that would fit.
- If given a list, choose an item that sounds correct when you put it in the blank. Listen to see if it’s in the right form and is the right part of speech. Your ear will tell you.
- Check off answer words as you use them.

## **Short-Answer Questions**

Short-answer questions are items that are answered by writing a few words or sentences.

Follow these tips to increase your success with short-answer questions:

- Read the directions carefully. Find out how long your answer should be. Should you respond in a few words, a full sentence, or more than one sentence?
- Use a part of the question to begin your answer. For example, take this question: What right does the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protect? You could begin your answer like this: The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the right to . . . .
- If more than one answer is possible and only one is asked for, check with the teacher. He or she may be able to explain the question further. Or there may be a mistake on the test.
- If you can’t give a complete answer, give a partial one. Write as much as you know.

## Essay Questions

An essay is writing that you do in response to a question or prompt.

Essay questions test whether you have a deep understanding of your subject.

Writing essays is a skill that takes knowledge and practice. Here are a few important tips to get you started:

- Read the question carefully. Underline important words in the question; for example, *list*, *compare*, *summarize*, *explain*, *discuss*.
- Plan your essay before you begin writing it.
- Budget your time. Make sure you have time to cover the main points and support them.
- Review, edit, and correct your essay.

You can find more practical tips and study strategies for writing essays in *Student Success Handbook* and *Help Yourself* (cited below).

For test-taking success, learn strategies for answering the common types of test questions. Then use the strategies that help you most.