

## Test-Taking Hints

1. **Anticipate the answer and look for something close to it.** Develop an answer in your mind before you read the options. Then look for a response that comes closest to your anticipated answer.
2. **Consider all alternatives before choosing an answer.** Read all the options, especially when the first answer appears correct. Do not rush to record an answer without considering all the alternatives.
3. **Avoid answers with 100 percent words.** All and never mean 100 percent of the time, without exceptions. Often choices that include 100 percent (absolute) words are wrong. Other 100 percent words to avoid are  
no                      none                      only  
every                      always                      must
4. **If two options mean the same, eliminate both.** If *both* is not a possible answer and two items say basically the same thing, then neither can be correct.
5. **Validate true responses on “All of the following except.”** In this type of question, you must recognize several responses as correct and find the one that is incorrect.
6. **Cross out answers you know are incorrect.** This helps focus your attention on the most reasonable options.
7. **Use the following clues when you have no idea of the answer and must guess.**
  - a. The longest answer is often correct.
  - b. The answer in the middle, especially one with the most words, is often correct.
  - c. If two answers have the opposite meaning, one of them is probably correct.
  - d. Answers with qualifiers, such as generally, probably, most, often, some, sometimes, and usually, are frequently correct.

## SPECIFIC HINTS FOR TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

1. **Answers with absolute words** such as all, always, everyone, never, and only **are usually false.**
2. **Answers with qualifiers** such as generally, probably, most, often, sometimes, and usually **are frequently true.**
3. **Simplify questions with double negatives by crossing out both negatives** and then determining the correct answer.
4. **Mark the statement false if it is partly false.**
5. **Write out the word “true” or “false”.**

## SPECIFIC HINTS FOR ANSWERING MATCHING QUESTIONS

1. **Read both columns carefully** before matching any items.
2. **Match the items you are sure of first.**
3. **Anticipate the match** before referring to the possible choices.
4. **Cross out the choices once they have been used** unless answers can be used more than once.
5. **Use all the matching items** if each column has the same number of items.

## SPECIFIC HINTS FOR ANSWERING FILL-IN QUESTIONS

1. **Read the questions to yourself so you can actually hear what is being said.** If more than one response comes to mind, write them both lightly in the margin. Then when you review your answers later, choose the answer that feels most right to you.
2. **Make sure each answer you provide fits logically and grammatically** into its slot in the sentence. For example: *An \_\_\_\_\_ lists ideas in a sequence.* (The correct answer is enumeration.) Note that the word an signals that the correct answer begins with a vowel.
3. **Remember that not all fill-in answers require only one word.** If you think several words are needed to complete the answer, write in all the words unless the instructor or the directions indicate that only single-word responses will be accepted.

## SPECIFIC HINTS FOR ANSWERING ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. **Read the directions carefully** and do exactly what is asked. If the question requires you to list or enumerate such as “List the six major types of transportation,” write the numbers 1 through 6 with a type of transportation listed after each number.
2. **Make a schedule.** Decide how much time you can allot to each question. Give more time to those that are worth more points and that are harder for you.
3. **Organize your response.** Take a few minutes to brainstorm and jot down ideas rather than writing the first thing that pops into your head. If the time runs short, use an outline or a diagram to express your remaining ideas.
4. **Use an appropriate style.** Be respectful; do not use slang. Avoid empty words. Words like good, interesting, and nice say very little. Be more direct and descriptive in your writing. Write in complete sentences.
5. **Be aware of appearance.** Research has shown that, on average, essays written in a clear, legible handwriting receive a higher grade than essays written somewhat illegibly. Proofread for correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

6. **Predict and practice.** Predict possible essay questions by using the table of contents and textbook headings to form questions. Practice brainstorming to answer these questions. Do as much thinking as possible to prepare yourself to take the test before you sit down to begin writing.
7. **Write something.** Despite careful preparation, you may forget an answer. If this should happen, do not leave a blank page; write down something. By writing down something you give the instructor the chance to give you some points for trying!
8. **After the test, read an “A” paper.** You can see what you should and could have done. Use that paper as a model from which to learn.

Following are a number of key words used in essay questions and a description of what they mean.

*Compare:* list the similarities between things

*Contrast:* note the differences between things

*Criticize:* state your opinion and stress the weaknesses

*Define:* state the meaning so that the term is understood and use examples

*Describe:* state the characteristics so that the image is vivid

*Diagram:* make a drawing that demonstrates relationships

*Discuss:* define the issue and elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages

*Evaluate:* state positive and negative views and make a judgment

*Explain:* show cause and effect and give reasons

*Illustrate:* provide examples

*Interpret:* explain your own understanding of a topic which includes your opinions

*Justify:* give proof or reasons to support an opinion

*List:* record a series of numbered items

*Outline:* sketch out the main points with their significant supporting details

*Prove:* use facts as evidence in support of an opinion

*Relate:* connect items and show how one influences another

*Review:* give an overview with a summary

*Summarize:* retell the main points

*Trace:* move sequentially from one event to another