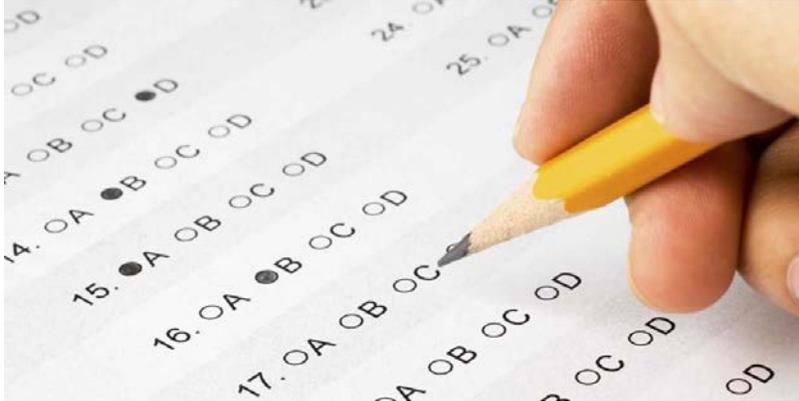




## **MULTIPLE-CHOICE EXAM PASSING STRATEGY**



Ideally, multiple-choice exams would be random, without patterns of right or wrong answers. However, all tests are written by humans, and human nature makes it impossible for any test to be truly random.

Here are a few of Multiple-choice exam tactics for outsmarting any multiple-choice test:

### **1. Ignore conventional wisdom.**

You've probably been given test-taking advice along the lines of "always guess the middle answer if you don't know" or "avoid any answer that uses the words 'never,' 'always,' 'all,' or 'none'" at some point in your life. However this conventional wisdom doesn't hold up against statistics. In fact, he found that the answers "none of the above" or "all of the above" were correct 52% of the time. Choosing one of these answers gives you a 90% improvement over random guessing, he says.

### **2. Look at the surrounding answers.**

Study found correct answer choices hardly repeated consecutively, so looking at the answers of the questions you *do* know will help you figure out the ones you're stuck on. For example, if you're stuck on question No. 2, but know that the answer to No. 1 is A and the answer to No. 3 is D, those choices can probably be eliminated for No. 2. Of course, "knowledge trumps outguessing". Cross out answers you know are wrong based on facts first.

### **3. Choose the longest answer.**

It was also noticed that the longest answer on multiple-choice tests was usually correct. "Test makers have to make sure that right answers are indisputably right," he says. "Often this demands some qualifying language. They may not try so hard with wrong answers." If one choice is noticeably longer than its counterparts, he says it's likely the correct answer.

#### 4. Eliminate the outliers.

Some exams, like the SATs, are randomized using computers, negating any patterns usually found in the order of the answers. However, no matter their order, answer choices that are incongruent with the rest are usually wrong, according to recent study. It gives the following sample answers from an SAT practice test, without including the question:

- A. haphazard...radical
- B. inherent...controversial
- C. improvised...startling
- D. methodical...revolutionary
- E. derivative...gradual

Because the meaning of "gradual" stands out from the other words in the right column, choice E can be eliminated. Study then points out that "haphazard" and "improvised" have almost identical meanings. Because these choices are so close in meaning, A and C can also be eliminated, allowing you to narrow down over half the answers without even reading the question. For the record, the correct answer is D.

