

Active Learning and Test Taking in the Health Sciences

- **Mechanics of Test Taking**
- **Strategies for Multiple Choice Questions at the graduate and professional levels**
- **Doctors**
- **Test Analysis**

Mechanics of Test Taking

Practice, Practice, Practice

- **Level of proficiency/Reality (What do I want?)**
- **Time Management/Rate**
- **Time Management/Planning**
- **Knowledge is power (or maybe just a higher score) – What works, What does not**
- **Simulation of the Testing Environment**

Pacing

- **Note the total number of items on the exam or in the block**
- **Time per item**
- **Most productive strategy**

Analyzing

- **If possible, complete the questions that cover the content you know best**
- **If you are not penalized for guessing, choose B or C**

Mechanics of Test Taking

- **If given paper or a laminated page, write associations, mnemonics, mind maps, or brainstorming related to question material**
- **If a question is written with a “NOT” or an “EXCEPT”, write the question number on the paper or page and place a big “F” by it. Place your pencil or marker in the hand that you do not write and keep it on the “F” until you have selected an answer**



Mechanics of Test Taking

- **Relaxation**
 - **Practice positive self-talk and visualizations during preparation period**
 - **Practice relaxation techniques during preparation period**
- **Checking**
 - **If you feel more emotional (angry, frustrated, not as confident) about a question or questions, check the answers to those questions and the next few questions to ensure that the marked choice was your chosen answer**

Strategies for Answering Test Questions

1. **Cover the options/choices.**
2. **Read the last sentence FIRST.**
3. **Look for “doctors” (words that would change the meaning if deleted, often opposites, i.e., gain/loss, early/late, ab-/ad-, etc.).**
4. **Brainstorm what you DO know based on what is in the stem. What it makes you think of, What is related, etc.**

Predict answer as though the question were a short-answer or open-ended question rather than multiple-choice.

Strategies for Answering Test Questions

5. Look at **THREE (3)** choices – get rid of at least one.
6. Continue this process uncovering one at a time until you have it down to two (2) possible answers.
7. Look at the two left. Think about **HOW** are they **DIFFERENT**. Is there one answer that is **MORE** correct because of a “doctor” in the question.
8. Select the **BEST** answer based on your **ACTIVE** analysis of the question.

DOCTORS

Look for **doctors**.

Doctors according to *The Princeton Review* are:

words that when taken out of the question or the choices, change the question and subsequently the answer chosen.

QUESTION

Michael, age 3 years, was admitted to the emergency room after being rescued from a fire in his home. He is having difficulty breathing. An early sign of respiratory distress that you might observe in Michael is:

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The doctor in the question/stem is

"early".

CHOICES

- a. **Increased pulse rate**
- b. **Cyanosis**
- c. **Decreased pulse rate**
- d. **Clammy skin**

A sign of respiratory distress is Cyanosis but an early sign of respiratory distress is **increased** pulse rate. Cyanosis is a distracter.



EXAMPLE/PRACTICE

Before the Exam

- **The morning of the exam, do 5-10 previously chosen questions for warm-up**
- **Use the 2-3 days prior to the exam for review and memorization.**
- **The day prior to the exam administration, study 3-4 hours of what you know that you know and then take the rest of the day and the evening off. Leave your home, go to a movie or do something distracting just not dangerous or coma-inducing.**

Test Analysis

(WHY was a question/s missed????)

1. **Misreading** (i.e., reading efferent as afferent, independent as dependent...) **Skipped over something important by reading too fast and/or making assumptions.**
2. **Misinterpreted** (thought about “what ifs” and other extraneous matter **NOT** in the question).
3. **Missed** a “doctor” that changed the meaning that would have changed the answer chosen.
4. **Gave up** too quickly.
5. **Is this a particular type of question that is historically more challenging** (negatively phrased, case based, illustrated, math-related).
6. **Did not know** the information needed to problem-solve for the answer.