

The Multiple Choice Questions

60 minutes

What do the multiple choice questions require of me?

These questions present several valid options in response to a challenging and appropriate question. They are designed to separate the knowledgeable, perceptive, and thoughtful reader from the superficial and impulsive one. You will be expected to follow sophisticated syntax; respond to diction; be comfortable with challenging vocabulary; be familiar with rhetorical terminology; make inferences; be sensitive to irony and tone; recognize components of organization and style; be familiar with modes of discourse and rhetorical strategies; and recognize how information contained in citations contributes to the author's purpose.

Will the reading passages be familiar?

It is intended that the passages will be totally new to you, and there will not be context clues. For example, introductory material such as historical context, a title, explanatory notes, and even the names of the authors. Most passages will be identified only by their date of publication.

How do I make sure that I am an active, critical reader?

- Underline, circle, and annotate the text. Keep your pencil in your hand and on the page as you read.
- Read for the big picture. "What is the gist of the passage?" Condense the main idea into a pithy sentence or two. Underline the thesis when you see it.
- Read closely, paying attention to punctuation, syntax, diction, pacing, and organization.
- Hear the words in your head. Read as if you were reading the passage aloud to an audience, emphasizing meaning and intent.
- Use the background information provided, such as the title, author, date of publication, and footnotes.
- Be aware of organizational and rhetorical devices and techniques.
- Be aware of lines that contribute to the theme, and be sensitive to details that will obviously be material for multiple-choice questions.
- Look for clues to the author's attitude, purpose, and intent. Is the passage meant to entertain? To inform? To provoke controversy? To inspire or enlighten the reader?
- Analyze the structure. Which ideas come first? Second? Third? How are they linked? Why are they sequenced in this way?
- Examine how the author creates an effect on the reader.
- Consider the author's qualifications.

What is the structure of the multiple-choice questions?

There are several basic patterns that the AP test makers employ.

- The *straightforward question*.
 - This passage is an example of...a contrast/comparison essay.
 - The pronoun "it" refers to...his gait.
- The question that refers you to specific lines and asks you to *draw a conclusion or to interpret*.
 - Lines 52-57 serve to...reinforce the author's thesis.
- The *ALL...EXCEPT question* requires more time as it demands that you consider every possibility.
 - The author develops her speech using all of the following except...an ethical appeal.
- The question that asks you to *make an inference or to abstract a concept not directly stated in the passage*.
 - In "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," the reader can infer that the speaker is...religious.
- The *killer question*—the most problematic and time consuming.
 - In the passage "night" refers to
 - I. the death of the young woman
 - II. a pun on Sir William's title
 - III. the end of the affair
 - A. I only
 - B. I and II
 - C. I and III
 - D. II and III
 - E. I, II, and III
- The *footnote question* requires you to abstract, interpret, or apply information contained in footnotes attached to passages.
 - The purpose of the footnote is to...cite a primary source.

What kinds of questions can I expect?

You need to be aware of how structural patterns and grammatical and syntactic relationships contribute to meaning. Questions pertain to almost everything that the author has done to compose the passage. Thus, the list of what you need to know includes the functions of paragraphs and how paragraphs are used in developing ideas. You also must have a sense of sentences: how sentences function in a passage; how sentences of different lengths, structure, and type (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex) relate to tone and meaning. You must be aware of the uses of subordination, coordination, appositives, and parenthetical ideas. You may also be asked about word order, tone, diction, transitions, repetition, parallelism, and use of alliteration, allusion, antithesis, apostrophe, and figurative language that includes metaphor, allusions, similes, hyperbole, paradox, and irony.

What test-taking strategies should I keep in mind?

- Work the questions in order because there may be a logic to working sequentially.
- Write on the exam booklet. Mark it up. Make it yours. Interact with the test.
- Do not spend too much time on any one question.
- Do not be misled by the length or appearance of a selection. There is no correlation between the length of the passage and the difficulty of the questions.
- Don't fight the question or the passage. You may know other information about the subject of the text or a question. It's irrelevant. Work within the given context.
- Consider all of the choices in a given question.
- Sometimes a later question will contradict an answer to a previous one. Reconsider both.
- Remember that all parts of an answer must be correct.
- When in doubt, go back to the text.

Process of Elimination:

1. Read the five choices.
2. If no choice immediately strikes you as correct, use the process of elimination. Eliminate any which are obviously wrong. Eliminate those choices which are too narrow or too broad. Eliminate illogical choices. Eliminate answers which are synonymous. Eliminate answers which cancel each other out.
3. If two answers are close, find the one general enough to contain all aspects of the question or the one limited enough to be the detail the question is seeking.

Substitution/Fill-in the Blank:

1. Rephrase the question, leaving a blank where the answer should go.
2. Use each of the choices to fill in the blank until you find the one that is the best fit.

Using Context:

1. Use this technique when the question directs you to specific lines, words, or phrases.
2. Locate the given word, phrase, or sentence and read the sentence before and after the section of the text to which the question refers.

Anticipate:

As you read the passage, mark any details and ideas that you would ask a question about.

Intuition/The Educated Guess:

Have the confidence to use the educated guess as a valid technique. You have a wealth of skills and knowledge that may be triggered by a question. This can be the basis for your educated guess.

How does the scoring of the multiple-choice section work?

You will earn one point for every correct answer, and you will be deducted one quarter point for every wrong answer. The multiple-choice section constitutes 45% of your total score for the entire exam.

How do I pace myself?

You will have 60 minutes to answer 45-60 objective questions on four to five prose passages. The test does not become more difficult as it progresses; therefore, you will want to give yourself the opportunity to answer each set of questions. Work at a pace of about one question per minute. Reading the text carefully is a must. Don't waste time reading the questions before reading the selection. Be a slow, careful, active, and critical reader.

What if I run out of time?

If time is running out and you haven't finished the last selection, scan the questions and look for the shortest questions and those that point you to a specific line. Look for specific detail or definition questions. Look for self-contained questions that do not require you to go to the passage to answer the question.

The questions will be factual, technical, analytical, and inferential. The chart illustrates the types of key words and phrases in these categories that you can expect to encounter.

Factual	Technical	Analytical	Inferential
Words refer to	Sentence structure	Rhetorical strategy	Effect of diction
Allusions	Style	Shift in development	Tone
Antecedents	Grammatical purpose	Rhetorical stance	Inferences
Pronoun referents	Dominant technique	Style	Effect of description
	Imagery	Metaphor	Effect of last paragraph
	Point-of-view	Contrast	Effect on reader
	Organization of passage	Comparison	Narrator's attitude
	Narrative progress of passage	Cause/effect	Image suggests
		Argument	Effect of detail
	Conflict	Description	Author implies
	Irony	Narration	Symbol
	Function of...	How something is characterized	Author most concerned with
		General-specific	
		Specific-general	
		Imagery	
		Passage is primarily concerned with	
		Function of...	