For example, for 60 multiple choice questions, you should need about an hour. Rather than tell yourself that you have sixty minutes to complete a section, use the clock to set a deadline: after reviewing the exam, you may begin your multiple choice section at 2:10, so mark on your booklet that you need to be finished answering questions in this section at 3:10. You can also break down a large section like this: questions #1-15 finished at 2:25, #16-30 at 2:40, and so on. Remember that some questions will take only 20 seconds, while others may require more time, but it all averages out in the end. Be sure to leave time for review and to complete the answer sheet while you work through the multiple choice exam.

**Manage your Stress**

You will be better able to control any stress you feel for the exam by taking a few moments to review and plan your approach. Take some deep breaths. Jot a few notes about items you do not wish to forget. And then remember, you are in control, so approach with an eye for detail and a clear direction to show what you have learned in the course.

**Types of Multiple Choice Questions**

**Factual Questions** require simple recall of a definition, formula, place, name or date.

The first hominid species to populate Europe and Asia was most probably
a. Homo erectus
b. Homo radiensis
c. Homo habilis
d. Homo sapiens
**Conceptual Questions** can be tougher than factual questions because they test your knowledge of definitions, theories, and process by asking questions that require you to think about them, often in a way that is different from how the concept was discussed in the text or in class. These questions generally address one part of a larger concept.

The number of patrons at Tim Hortons in a given time period is an example of which level of measurement?

a. Interval  
b. Ordinal  
c. Ratio  
d. Nominal

Use your knowledge of how each of these terms is defined to correctly respond to the question. Focus on the key words in the question – “number of patrons” and “given time period” – and match it to the term which is defined the same way.

**Applied Questions** require you to use what you have learned to identify the appropriate response for a question using a new situation or scenario.

A systems review of Mr. Lawson, a 101 year old man in Peterborough, reveals wrinkled skin, pear-shaped body, 10 pound weight loss in the last decade, diminished appetite, “pasty” mouth, dentures, and constipation. Mr. Lawson has edematous, cool feet and is unable to go up one flight of stairs without shortness of breath. A possible explanation for Mr. Lawson’s edematous feet is:

a. constricted arteries.  
b. use of diaphragm for expiration  
c. dilated and tortuous veins.  
d. an increase in anteroposterior chest diameter.

To respond to this question, first consider common causes of edema, and then consider the current state of the patient, identifying key factors that match the causes for edema. More than one of the responses may correctly identify a cause for edema, but only one will correctly identify its cause for this particular patient. Be sure to answer with the presented case in mind.

**The Key to Success:**

**Read Carefully and Methodically**

A multiple choice question may seem straight-forward, but it is essential that you read very closely and carefully to understand the question and the possible answers.

Try this technique:

- First, use another paper to cover the responses in order to focus on the stem or the question. Underline key words to correctly establish what the question asks.
- Then reveal each response one at a time, identifying the decoy, the possible answer(s), and the correct answer. This allows you to avoid confusion and to consider each option for its own merits, rather than in opposition to the other, similarly-worded responses.
- You may find it helpful to mark each response with a check or an x. Alternatively, you can guess the answer to the question prior to revealing the responses and then look for your initial response in the listed options.

1. Read the question first. Highlight key words.

Which evidence best supports the hypothesis that the presence of **toxic latex in leaves deters insects** from feeding on a plant?
2. Reveal each answer one at a time. Assess responses based on your knowledge about requirements for evidence: precision and detail. They are somewhat similar – more than one response may support the hypothesis, but **one response is better than the others**.

a. Many insects do not feed on latex-producing plants.

b. Latex-producing plants release milky latex when their leaves are damaged.

c. Beetles that drain latex out of part of a leaf can then feed on that part.

d. Beetles that cut veins in the leaves can then feed on the latex released.

e. Latex-producing plants have high survival rates.

**Consider the Qualifiers**

Relative terms like *often, seldom, perhaps, sometimes, generally, may, and tend*, usually indicate a degree of play; the statement involved doesn’t have to be unconditionally true. Absolute terms — *always, never, only, necessary, must* — have the opposite effect; the statement must meet all conditions. So in the example below, although all of the responses could be correct, only one response is the most important fact and the right answer.

The most important fact about administering medication to a toddler is the child’s
a. weight
b. height
c. age
d. body surface area

Questions in the negative form – as well as questions that contain double negatives – can also cause students some distress. In this case, you may find it helpful to flip the question to make it positive. Ask “what are the consequences of adopting agriculture?” By identifying the responses which list the consequences, you will be able to determine which options list answers which are not the consequences of adopting agriculture.

Which of the following is **not** a consequence of adopting agriculture?

a. greater leisure time, more economic security and better health
b. more independence for individuals, freedom to move, greater security
c. better education, poorer health, greater variety in diet
d. all of the above

**Another hint**: it’s easy to eliminate the response “all of the above” once one response is deemed incorrect. Likewise, if “none of the above” is an option, and one or more of the options above it is correct, then “none of the above” can be eliminated.

**Strategic Elimination**

When you are unsure of the correct answer for a particular question, mark it and move on. You can come back to it once you have answered the remaining questions, and you may have a new perspective on what the question is asking or what the responses are stating. It is almost always in the student’s best interest to guess the response for a tough question; only if the instructor is using negative marking should you leave the response blank.

Consider the following strategies to strategically eliminate incorrect answers:
• Eliminate a response that does not match the sentence structure of the question or prompt; if an option leads you to a grammatically incorrect sentence, it is probably not the correct response.
• Eliminate a response that seems out of synch with the rest of the options; if an option is not written in the same style as all the other choices – for example, a response that is a list when the others are not, it is probably not correct.
• Eliminate two responses if the other two are very similar in wording. In the example below, options b and c list similar responses; one of these options is more likely to be correct than a or d.

Three features cultures must possess before they are deemed states are
a. food surplus, ceramic technology, wheeled vehicles
b. food surplus, formal government, mobile settlements
c. food surplus, urban cores, formal government
d. food surplus, social equality, fine art

Revisit all your Answers

Although disproven by many educational psychologists, students continue to cling to the misconception that they should not change an answer once they have selected it. Your first instinct is not always correct; you are more likely to select the correct response when you take the time to review your responses and select the best answers. With time to think, some of the pressure of the exam is alleviated, and you may have a clearer head which will allow you to thoughtfully consider the question and select the response that is complete and correct.

All of these sample questions came from the online exam bank at Bata Library. Trent students can sign in and search for old exams, which are a great resource for study:
http://cat1.lib.trentu.ca/allexams/go.exe?fgdilgmlnq10