

Improving Your Test-Taking Skills

Objective Tests

T RUE/FALSE QUESTIONS



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True-false tests generally consist of reading a statement and deciding if the statement is true (accurate/correct) or false (inaccurate/incorrect). True-false questions tend to be difficult because of their ambiguity (i.e., the statements can be interpreted in different ways). They also are difficult because they may tend to focus on "trivia" (insignificant or unessential information) or minute details.

Here are five suggestions for taking true-false tests. Keep in mind that you may need to modify some of these suggestions after your test is returned based upon how your individual instructor writes test questions and constructs tests. In the examples given, the correct answers are enclosed in parentheses.

1. Read each statement carefully but do not spend too much time trying to think of the answer. Sometimes the more you think about the statement or the more you know and understand about the subject, the more likely you will think of exceptions and then not know how to answer the statement. "Answer" a true-false question; don't try to "solve" it. When in doubt, you might mark an answer and then write a comment in the margin explaining your answer to the instructor.

Example: Plant growth depends on the interaction of water, carbon dioxide, and sunlight. T (F)

Your comment: *Not all plants contain chlorophyll or need sunlight for growth.*

2. When in doubt about the answer, guess and mark the item with a question mark (?); you have a 50-50 (1 out of 2) chance of getting the correct answer. The question mark will remind you that you guessed at this item when you are checking over and reconsidering your "guessed" answers before you turn in the test. A situation where you may not want to guess is if you will be penalized for guessing (i.e., points deducted for wrong answers). If you have to guess, check your responses to see if any pattern of answers exists (i.e., more F's than T's or vice versa). If not, one suggestion is to mark a statement "true" because true-false tests may often contain more true answers than false ones. True statements tend to be easier to write than plausible false ones. However, when the tests are returned, survey the test's correct answers to determine if this does indeed apply to your instructor's tests.
3. Watch for statements containing absolute qualifier words such as "always" or "never," "all" or "none," "everyone" or "no one," or "only." These statements allow for no exceptions and are generally, but not always, false. One suggestion is to substitute one qualifier with another qualifier such as "usually," "sometimes" or "rarely" (for "always" and "never"), "most," "some," "few" (for "all" and "none" or "everyone" and "no one"), or "also" (for "only"). If the statement with the substituted qualifier is more true, then the original statement will be "false"; otherwise, the original statement will be "true."

Example: The Honda Motor Company only makes cars. T (F)



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The underlined absolute qualifier "only" allows for no exceptions. Try substituting another qualifier in place of the absolute qualifier.

Like this: The Honda Motor Company also makes cars.

This statement is more true since Honda does also make motorcycles and lawn mowers; thus, the original statement with the absolute qualifier will be "false."

Example: All triangles have three sides. (T) F

This statement is "true" even with the underlined absolute qualifier, so be careful.

4. Watch for negative words and prefixes such as "never," "none," "not," "cannot," "dis-," "un-," "in-," "il-," and "non-" and for the use of double negatives (which makes the statement positive).

Example: The capital of New York State is not Albany. T (F)

These can be confusing. Read the statement without using the negative word to determine if the statement is true or false.

Like this: The capital of New York State is Albany.

This statement without the negative word is "true"; therefore, the original statement will be "false." If the statement without the negative word is "false," the original statement will be "true."

Example: A nation can never consume more than it cannot produce. (T) F

Read the statement without using the double negative words to determine if the statement is true or false.

Like this: A nation can consume more than it can produce.

This statement without the double negatives is "true" so the original statement will also be "true"; if the statement without the double negatives is "false," the original statement will also be "false."

5. Watch for modifying or limiting phrases or clauses inserted into true-false questions. Instructors often insert incorrect names, dates, places or other details to make an otherwise true statement inaccurate. Likewise, watch for multiple ideas or concepts within the same true-false statement. All parts of the statement must be true or the entire statement is false.

Example: The Sherman Anti-Trust Act, passed in 1870, declared combinations in restraint of trade illegal. T (F)

Example: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and the *Dream Merchant* are three of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies. T (F)

The underlined sections are false; the rest of the statements are true. Since all parts of the statement must be true (and they are not), the entire statement is false in both cases.

Sample True-False Test #1

Directions: Mark with an X either "T" (True) or "F" (False) to indicate whether the statement is true or false.

1. Hearts contain four chambers: a left and right ventricle, T F

and a left and right auricle.

Comment:

2. You can look up the meaning of a word in the glossary, index, or dictionary. T F
3. All fears are learned at an early age. T F
4. Making note cards is the only way to study vocabulary. T F
5. Whenever there is a fatal accident on the highway, drinking is invariably involved. T F
6. It is unlikely there is no human life on other planets. T F
7. College graduates will always be able to find good jobs. T F
8. Most murders occur among family members. T F
9. Carl Jung, the Russian psychologist, is credited with having founded analytical psychology. T F
10. The numbers 1, 3, and 9 are not prime numbers. T F

Pretend you were running out of time and had to answer the last two questions, #11 and #12, without reading them. What would you circle?

11. T F

12. T F

Questions adapted from: Carol Kanar (1991). The Confident Student (pp.342-43). Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton

ANSWERS

1. The heart contains four chambers, a left and right ventricle and a left and right auricle. T F

Comment:

2. You can look up the meaning of a word in the glossary, index, or dictionary. T F

3. All fears are learned at an early age. T F

The absolute qualifier "all" makes this statement false.

4. Making note cards is the only way to study vocabulary. T F

The absolute qualifier "only" makes this statement false.

5. Whenever there is a fatal accident on the highway, drinking is invariably involved. TF

The absolute qualifier "invariably" makes this statement false.

6. It is unlikely there is no human life on other planets. TF

7. College graduates will always be able to find good jobs. T F

The absolute qualifier "always" makes this statement false.

8. Most murders occur among family members. T F

The qualifier "most" (almost all) makes this statement false.

9. Carl Jung has been called "the father of modern psychology." T F

10. The number 1, 3, and 9 are not prime numbers. T F

1. Unwed pregnant teenage girls are criticized more than the teenage boys who get them pregnant, because girls are totally responsible for setting sexual limits. T F
 2. Many communities in our state have a shortage of meals. T F
 3. Psychologists are more concerned about the causes of the problem than what to do about it. T F
 4. All pitbulls exhibit aggressive temperaments. T F
 5. It is believed that crystals have special powers. T F
 6. College graduates earn more money than high school graduates. T F
 7. Highly talented people live shorter lives than less talent people T F
 8. The homeless are on the street today because no one cared about them five years ago, when they could have been helped. T F
 9. All jobs get boring after a while T F
 10. Your first impression of someone often determines whether or not you will be friends later. T F
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1. There are twenty-seven people in the state who are capable of flying the space shuttle. T F
 2. Drug pushers are addicts themselves who support their habits by selling drugs. T F
 3. People with similar ethnic backgrounds tend to marry one another. T F
 4. Fisherman are more romantic than poets. T F

5. Kaywell, the noted researcher, stated in 1989 that "diploma mills" needed to be dealt with severely. T F
6. Crime often has its root in poverty. T F
7. The best-tasting fish is grouper. T F
8. All paragraphs must have a topic sentence. T F
9. Sermons are evaluated on the basis of how deeply people's emotions are touched. T F
10. All advertisement have specific objectives. T F

T F 4. The best way to study is to re-read your notes and assignments.

T F 3. People learn most efficiently and effectively by studying for one long period of time the night before a test.

T F 2. Teachers almost never gives clues beforehand about what is going to be on a test.

T F 5. It's very helpful to try to anticipate what questions your teacher will ask you on the test and then tell yourself the answer to those questions when you're studying

T F 6. A good way to relax for a test is to watch the late show with your friends, or get a good night's sleep.

T F 7. Students who worry a lot about tests always do better.

- T F 8. You should begin to answer the first question on the test right after you read it.
- T F 9. Read all of the directions on the test carefully; then follow them exactly.
- T F 10. Guess whenever you don't know the answer unless there's a penalty for guessing
- T F 11. Do the hardest questions first. That way you'll get the hardest questions out of the way.
- T F 12. Don't second guess yourself when going over your answers. Trust your first judgment unless new information comes up.
- T F 1. It is not impossible to construct test questions which are confusing.
- T F 2. The Battle of Gettysburg, fought in 1836, is generally considered to be the turning point of the Civil War.
- T F 3. The number of centimeters in one yard is 9.144.
- T F 4. Multiple-choice items, are used in most standardize tests because they are easier to score.
- T F 5. Willkie received a small number of votes in the election of 1940.
- T F 6. Only after having analyzed his problems and set up an hypothesis, should the experimenter, who need not be familiar with the literature in his field, decide upon an experimental design.

T F 7. The median of a series of scores is the midpoint of the series and is influenced strongly by extremely high or low scores.

T F 8. Occupational interests measured by a standardized vocational interest inventory are always reliable.

T F 9. Charles Edison is credited with inventing motion pictures.

T F 10. An individual's attitudes and interests can be ascertained by using check lists which are easier to construct and easier to use than rating scales.