

Multiple-Choice Test Taking Strategies

Math 112 has two types of questions:

1. **Mechanical**: these type of questions test your conceptual understanding and recall of definitions, notations, and other information learned for the topic
2. **Application**: these type of questions test your ability to apply the conceptual knowledge to real-life situations. They are usually scenario-based word problems and require conceptual understanding AND practical interpretation

Half of the exam questions are mechanical and half application-based.

Note regarding Process of Elimination: The difficulty level of elimination varies with the difficulty of each question. Successful Process of Elimination requires the following:

1. When to look at the choices? Always after you have read and understood the problem!
 - a. If it requires you to “find/determine/evaluate” something: **do the entire problem before looking at the choices**. Examples include: finding slope/intercept given a graph, determining domains, evaluating functions $f(h - 3)$, how much tax a person would pay
 - b. If it requires you to choose “which of the following...”: **collect context clues first, then look at the choices**. Examples include: choosing which table represents y as a function of x , choose a graph that represents a piecewise function
2. What if your answer doesn’t match the choices? Circle the problem and move on! Come back to it to look at it with fresher perspective.
 - a. Collect more context clues
 - b. Write down all you know about the topic/part of the topic being tested
 - c. Pick the most logical answer; if math is not working, use critical thinking skills
 - d. Remember the cost-benefit model problem in Exam 1 had an underlined and bolded clue phrase (**in thousands of dollars**) that needed to be used in your solution!
3. What if more than one answer seems correct? Use contextual clues!
 - a. Ask yourself: does the choice completely address the question?
 - b. If the choice is only partly true (or you must narrow down conditions, make significant assumption to pick that choice) then it is probably not a true answer
 - c. Ask yourself: would your instructor expect you to jump to that assumption? If not, don’t pick that answer.
 - d. Recognize contextual clues; the correct answer will always fit the context better
 - e. Be aware of for switchback words: “but”, “although”, “nevertheless”, “NOT”
4. How to manage time?
 - a. If you’re stuck on a problem or can’t recall what is being tested, circle the problem and move on to come back to it later
 - b. Work around getting nervous; being anxious/nervous/stressed/tired is OK. Don’t fight it, work through it.
 - c. Talk to your instructor if you think you need more than one hour for 20 questions.

Other suggestions:

1. **Read the problem carefully AND more than once** (!!!). Most mistake made in the first exam was due to students' negligence. Don't lose 5% of your exam percentage over a silly mistake
2. Do not falsely assume that the questions in the beginning are easier than the questions at the end of the booklet
3. Be aware that choices include common traps students fall into! The practice sets help you recognize the kinds of traps you can face in the exam for each type of the problem
4. Practice, practice, practice. Do all of the practice sets available on our website **at least** once! Make notes of what you know well and do not know well. If you get a problem wrong, attempt it again and again until you're convinced you will not repeat the mistake in the exam
5. Make use of office hours, Think Tank, studying with friends
6. Go over class notes, quiz mistakes, homework feedback before the exam