

CLEP Testing Tips

Multiple-Choice Tips - Strategies for answering multiple-choice questions

Pay close attention to directions.

Listen carefully to any instructions given by the test administrator and carefully read all directions in the software before you begin to answer the questions. Before your exam, we recommend that you familiarize yourself with the computerized format of the exam on the [CLEP Sampler](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/prep.html) as well as some sample questions which can be found at <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/prep.html>, to familiarize yourself with the computer-based test. A tutorial is available in the test software, so if you haven't had a chance to use the Sampler, don't worry, you'll have time to practice answering different question types before you take the actual test.

Pace yourself.

Make sure that you're not working too slowly. You should have answered at least half the questions in a section when half the time for that section has passed. If you have not reached that point in the section, speed up your pace on the remaining questions. Click on the **Time** button to see how much time you have left in the exam.



Read the entire question including all the answer choices before answering a question. Don't think that because the first or second answer choice looks good to you, it isn't necessary to read the remaining options.

Read and consider every question, BUT, don't spend too much time on any one question.

Questions that look complicated at first may not actually be so difficult once you have read them carefully. If you don't know the answer, after you've thought about it, go on to the next question. Mark that question using the **Mark** tool in the exam software and go back to it later. Use the **Review** tool to see a list of what questions you've marked for review, which ones you've not answered, and which questions you have not yet seen.



Make educated guesses.

Be sure to answer every question in the exam – you will not have additional points deducted for questions answered incorrectly.

Request official scrap paper for use during the exam to write notes or do calculations.

What you write on this scrap paper won't affect your score. Be sure to record all of your answers in the exam software.

Watch for key words like these in test questions:

all	generally	never	perhaps
always	however	none	rarely
but	may	not	seldom
except	must	often	sometimes
every	necessary	only	usually

When a question or answer option contains words such as "always," "every," "only," "never," and "none," there can be no exceptions to the answer you choose. Use of words such as "often," "rarely," "sometimes," and "generally" indicates that there may be some exceptions to the answer.

Essay Tips - Strategies for answering essay questions

If your college requires the essay portion for the Freshman Composition or the Literature exams, or if you are taking the English Composition with Essay exam, you should do some additional preparation for your CLEP exam. Taking an essay or a problem-solving test is very different from taking a multiple-choice test, so you will need to use some other strategies.

Please note, not all colleges require the essays. You should therefore check with the college or university to which you plan to send your scores to determine if an essay is required for credit.

Essay Formats

If you are taking the **English Composition with Essay** examination you will have to type your essay response into the computer at which your test is administered. You can familiarize yourself with entering responses via computer by using the CLEP Sampler

The optional essay portions of the **Freshman College Composition and Literature exams** are ordered separately, and are written in by hand on paper and collected by test center administrators.

Know how the exam will be graded and by whom.

The essay written as part of the **English Composition with Essay** examination is returned to CLEP and graded by English professors from a variety of colleges and universities across the United States.

The essay portions of the **Freshman College Composition and Literature exams**, on the other hand, are graded by the faculty of the college you designate as a score recipient. The College Board does not specify the guidelines and criteria for grading essays. Therefore, it may be helpful to talk with someone at your college to find out what criteria will be used to determine whether you will get credit.

- Ask how much emphasis will be placed on your writing ability and your ability to organize your thoughts as opposed to your knowledge of the subject matter.
- Find out how much weight will be given to your multiple-choice test score in comparison with your free-response grade in determining whether you will get credit.

This will give you an idea of where you should spend the greatest effort in studying for and taking the exam.

Determine in what order to answer the questions.

Answer the questions that you find the easiest first so you can spend any extra time on the questions you find more difficult.

Estimate how much time you can give to each question.

When you know which questions you'll answer and in what order, determine how much testing time remains and estimate how many minutes you'll spend each question. Unless suggested times are given for the questions or one question appears to require more or less time than the others, allot an equal amount of time to each question.

Watch for key words like these in test questions.

Before answering a question, re-read it carefully to make sure you are interpreting it correctly. Pay careful attention to key words, such as those listed below that often appear in free-response questions. Be sure you know the exact meaning of these words before taking the exam.

analyze	apply	assess
demonstrate	derive	describe
enumerate	explain	generalize
list	outline	prove
compare	contrast	define
determine	discuss	distinguish
illustrate	interpret	justify
rank	show	summarize

If a question asks you to "outline," "define," or "summarize," do not write a detailed explanation; if a question asks you to "analyze," "explain," "illustrate," "interpret," or "show," you must do more than briefly describe the topic.

Organize your thoughts.

Write a brief outline on the scrap paper provided by the test center before you write your essay response.