

A Quick Guide to Law School Multiple-Choice Questions

How do multiple-choice questions work?

There are three parts to a multiple-choice question: the root, the stem, and the answer set.

- The **root** is the hypothetical fact pattern. When analyzing the fact pattern, stick to what is written on the page and do not make assumptions.
- The **stem** is the question or task. Pay close attention to the call of the question.
- The **answer set** is the answer choices. One answer will be the *most* correct. The other answers will be incorrect or incomplete.

What is my game plan during the exam?

- 1. Read the entire fact pattern and question slowly and carefully.**
 - Multiple-choice questions are a test of close and careful reading as well as thorough knowledge of the rules.
 - Approach the fact pattern the same way you approach issue-spotter exams: *spot the issue(s), identify the relevant rule(s), apply the rule(s) to the facts, and reach a conclusion.*
 - Resist the temptation to add to the fact pattern. Do not assume any facts or ignore missing elements. Stick to what is written on the page.
- 2. Read all of the answer choices and then select the best one.**
 - Eliminate incorrect answers. Incorrect answers may be wrong because they do not resolve the issue or resolve a different issue, apply the wrong legal reasoning or mischaracterize the facts, or misstate the law.
 - Do not complete an answer choice in your head or assume/add something that is not written on the page. In order to be correct, the answer must be correct in every respect.
 - Watch out for incomplete definitions or arguments. An option might sound correct and be *partially* correct, but it is incorrect because it is incomplete in some way.
 - A correct answer might appear in plain English rather than legal terms. The answer with a Latin phrase or confusing legal terminology could be, but is not necessarily, the correct answer.
- 3. When it is time to move on, move on.**
 - Figure out how much time you will have for each question and stick to it.
 - Once you have hit your time limit on a question, select your best guess (after eliminating wrong answers). Mark the question for follow-up.
 - After making your best guess, move on both literally and mentally, so that you can focus on the following questions. Do not get hung up on any one question.
- 4. Answer every question, even if you are not sure.**
 - If you are not sure, mark the question and then return to it if you have time.

- If you have to guess, first eliminate answers that you know are wrong.
 - If you have no idea which answer is correct, it is generally better to pick a more precise answer over a more general answer, and to avoid answers with absolutes (never, always, must, cannot, etc.).
5. **Take all the time you have.** If you finish early, go back to the answers that you marked. If you still have more time, go through every question and check your work.

What if I am terrible at multiple-choice questions?

- The first thing you need to do is change the narrative. Adopt a growth mindset. *I've struggled with multiple-choice questions in the past, but with practice, I will acquire the necessary skills to succeed.*
- Remind yourself that most law school multiple-choice questions are simply short issue-spotters and the same skills apply.
- *Practice, practice, practice.* Practice tests not only help assess what you have learned, they also help you learn new material and retain it. If you find yourself avoiding practice questions because they increase your anxiety, that is all the more reason to do it. You can find resources for practice on [the Academic Skills Program website](#) (scroll down to “multiple-choice”).