

Multiple Choice Questions

Tips and Tricks

1. Focus!

Multiple choice tests can make you bored, panicky, or both. It's important to focus on the passage, not how scared or tired you are. Some ideas to help you:

- Read the **INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH** and the **QUESTIONS** before beginning the passage itself.
- While reading, **UNDERLINE**, **CIRCLE**, or otherwise **MARK** items that strike you as important.

2. Take Advantage of All the Information That's There.

A common test-taking mistake is to rush, which can cause you to miss important information.

- Read **ALL** of the answer choices before you make a decision.
- Some questions require you to think about them, but others are answered directly in the passage. **Identify questions that will be answered directly, and GO BACK to the passage to find the answer.**
- If you have trouble finding the information in the passage, try skimming the first two sentences of every paragraph to help you locate it.
- If you still can't find the information in the passage, look in sidebars, labels, graphs, charts, etc.

3. If You Aren't sure About a Question, Use What You *Do* Know.

Another common test-taking mistake is to panic when you aren't sure of something. Even if you don't understand everything, or feel confused, you can still get many answers correct.

- **ELIMINATE** (cross out) any choices you know are wrong.
- Sometimes you don't understand the meaning of one of the answer choices. If so, consider all of the other choices. Choose the unfamiliar one only if none of the others make sense.
- If you don't know a word, and you know Spanish, check to see if it is similar to any Spanish words.

4. Keep Moving through the Test.

Sometimes nervous students get bogged down trying to understand every word in a passage. Taking too long to read a passage can actually make it harder to understand. You want to get the *main point* of the passage the first time through, not every single detail.

- Read straight through the passage at a medium speed and then go back to the passage to find the answers to specific questions.
- Don't spend too long on any one question. Make your best guess and then mark it so you can return to it if you have time.

5. Usually, Your First Choice is the Best Choice.

Don't change an answer unless you have a specific reason. Of course, if you actually find evidence that your first choice is wrong, go ahead and change your answer.

6. For questions that ask you to find the meaning of a specific word in the passage:

- Locate the word in the passage.
- Read the sentence **BEFORE** the word, the sentence **WITH** the word, and the sentence **AFTER** the word. (Many times the clue actually occurs **AFTER** the word.)

Once you have made a choice, read the sentence again, substituting your answer for the word in the sentence. Does the new sentence make sense?

Directions: Below you will find the introductory paragraph, title, and questions from an actual passage from the 2000 eighth grade ELA exam. Read, and look for all the information you can learn before even beginning the passage itself.

C.W. Gusewelle, a newspaper columnist, often wrote about his bird dog Rufus and the relationship that develops between people and dogs. These stories were later compiled into a book, *The Rufus Chronicle*. Read this excerpt from *The Rufus Chronicle*. Then do Numbers 19 through 25.

Make Yourself Comfortable, Rufus

by C.W. Gusewelle

19 In general, Rufus attained his goals through

20 Why is Rufus convinced he should not be an outdoor dog?

21 Why does the author compare Rufus to a buffalo calf?

22 Read this sentence from the passage:

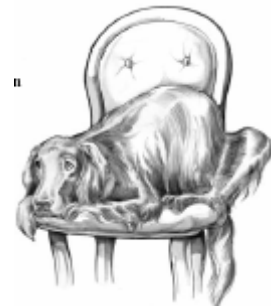
So he began insinuating himself into the chair whenever it pleased him.

In this sentence, what does *insinuating* mean?

23 Rufus would probably agree with which statement?

24 Rufus tries to “resemble a cat” because the cats are allowed to

25 Now that years have passed, what is Rufus’s next goal?



Listening and Taking Notes

Tips and Tricks

1. Do Not Take Notes the First Time the Passage is Read. Just Listen.

It's best to get an overall understanding of the passage the first time through. Although it's tempting to start writing immediately, you may miss out on the meaning of the passage. If you understand the passage, you will be more focused in your note-taking because you will know what's important, and you will probably remember even more information than you wrote down.

2. Focus on Important Information.

- Sixth graders will hear a literary (story) passage. Focus on such things as characters, setting, problem and resolution.
- Seventh and eighth graders will hear an informational passage. Focus on main ideas and supporting details.

3. Don't Try to Organize Your Notes as You Take Them.

Although graphic organizers and outlines are wonderful devices, they take time. When you take notes, just write the information down in the order that you hear it. You can organize it before you write.

4. Express Information in as Few Words as Possible.

- Leave out connecting words, such as "a," "to," and "the."
- Restate information briefly. For example, "the wind whistling eerily over the high, snowy peaks of the Carpathian Mountains" becomes "windy mountains," or better yet, "windy mts."
- Use abbreviations:
 - After the first time, refer to characters by their first initial. For example, *Sally* becomes *S*.
 - Leave out vowels or word endings. For example, *center* becomes *ctr*.
 - Try these common abbreviations:

w/ with

w/o without

b/c because

+ and

@ at

number

info information

B4 before

2 to, too, or two

U you

→ led to, resulted in

Written Response Criteria

	High (6)	Medium (4)	Low (2)
Meaning Shows deep understanding of what the passage is trying to say.	Fulfills the requirements of the task. Addresses the theme or main elements of the text. Shows an insightful (deep) interpretation of the text. Makes connections beyond the text.	Fulfills some of the requirements of the task. Addresses some of the main elements of the text. Shows a mostly literal (surface) interpretation of the text. Makes some connections.	Fulfills some requirements of the task. Addresses the basic elements of the text. Shows little evidence that the student understood more than parts of the text. Makes few connections.
Development Uses details and examples to explain ideas.	Develops ideas fully with thorough explanation. Makes effective use of relevant and accurate examples from the text.	May be short, with little explanation, but enough development to answer the questions. Provides some examples and details from the text. May include minor inaccurate details.	May provide some text-based examples and details. May include some inaccurate details.
Organization Shows a clear, organized focus.	Establishes and maintains a clear focus. Shows a logical sequence of ideas through the use of appropriate transitions or other devices.	Is generally focused, but may include some irrelevant details. Shows a clear attempt at organization.	May show an attempt to establish a focus. May include some irrelevant information. Shows little attempt at organization.
Language Use Uses interesting language and vocabulary.	Is fluent and easy to read, with vivid language and a sense of engagement or voice. Is sophisticated in style, using varied sentence structure and challenging vocabulary.	Is readable, with some sense of engagement or voice. Primarily uses simple sentences and basic vocabulary.	Is readable with little sense of engagement or voice. Uses minimal vocabulary. May indicate fragmented thoughts.

Written Responses

Tips and Tricks

1. Answer the Question.

Many students lose points on their written responses simply because they haven't answered the question. This sounds silly, but here are some common mistakes:

- Writing about the passage in general, not the specific question
- Starting to answer the question, but then drifting off topic
- Answering only one part of a question that has multiple parts
- Including details from only one passage when asked to use details from two

How can you avoid these mistakes?

- Read the question first. Circle all the parts you must answer. Cross them out as you answer them.
- For a short response, start your first sentence with a restatement of the question. This can help keep you focused.
 - o *Question:* What do you think was the author's purpose for writing this article?
 - o *Answer:* The author's purpose for writing this article was...

2. Organize Your Response.

For an extended response question, it is extremely important for your writing to be clear and organized. Not only do you get points for organization itself, but it is easier for graders to locate information in an organized essay, making it less likely that they will overlook anything that can add to your score.

- Use your planning page wisely. Plan a paragraph (or two) for each part of the question. Plan which details and examples you will use to support your ideas. But DON'T write an entire rough copy, or you may run out of time.

3. Details, Details, Details!

This is probably the single most important thing to remember on the written responses. Whatever you say, back it up with details and examples from the passage.