

HELP STUDENTS IMPROVE THEIR PERFORMANCE ON ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL EXAMS: THE TRUE-FALSE METHOD OF TAKING A MULTIPLE-CHOICE EXAM

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Abstract

The use of multiple-choice format examinations (M/C exams) is pervasive in both U.S. academic exam settings and in high-stakes professional license exam settings. Scores earned in either setting have immediate- and long-range implications and consequences for examinees. The two purposes of this paper are (1) to share findings regarding marketing student's knowledge of and prior training in M/C exam taking strategies; and (2) to present a unique M/C exam-taking strategy that has work effective over the past thirty years and that builds student high-order thinking skills. The unique M/C exam-taking strategy entitled, *The True/False Method of Taking a Multiple-Choice Exam* (The T/F Method), is presented with implementation details and contrasted with typical M/C exam-taking pointers for taking the exam. Student and educator benefits of the method are discussed.

As multiple-choice exams appear to be linked into all levels of education and professional examination settings, collegiate marketing educators might assume that students have previously received good M/C exam-taking training somewhere in their educational process prior to the collegiate level. Perhaps some educators might never have questioned the type of M/C exam-taking skill training students might have had. And, never questions whether or not this training required students to apply analytical, critical, and differentiation thinking skills in taking exams or suggested only the well-known tips and tricks of guessing at the right answer (for instance, always choose "C" or always choose "C" or the longest answer when otherwise unsure). Multiple-choice exam-taking skills are all important as exam scores have important and immediate implications and consequences for the examinee, whether taking a driver's license exam, an academic exam, or a high-stakes exams, such as a real estate broker's license exam, medical license exam, CPA or CFA examination, or other professional license examination. Have marketing students ever had formal training in how to effectively and efficiently approach a multiple-choice exam? What do they know about taking multiple-choice exams, especially exam given in higher education and in the professional

workplace that require the application of analytical, critical and differentiation thinking skills?
Do marketing students desire such training, or more of such training?

As most educators know, M/C format exams tend to assess not only what students know about exam content, but fortunately or unfortunately, also assess students' possession of, or lack of, M/C exam-taking skills. Many students prefer M/C exams over essay and short-answer exams, however they tend to hate well-written M/C questions as well-written ones tend to have two or more 'possibly' correct answers, that some students might view as an educator's 'trick' question. Though in reality these questions, to an educator, are questions that demand students to exercise critical, analytical and differentiation thinking skills that are highly demanded in the workplace.

As M/C format exams are prevalently used by U.S. educators, licensing agencies, and in many other exam settings, and earned scores have immediate and long-range implications for examinees, what modifications or additions can contemporary marketing educators take to help students their performance when taking M/C exams? Some educators might suggest sending students to the Internet to learn 'mundane' M/C exam-taking skills such as 'never choose C as the correct answer option,' 'always choose C as the correct answer when otherwise not known,' 'always choose the longest answer option,' there will never likely be more than three answers of a like letter in a row,' and other tips and tricks of taking a multiple choice exam. Other marketing educators might suggest collegiate marketing programs need to take the responsibility of ensuring that each of its students is empowered with life-time M/C exam-taking analytical, critical and differentiation skills whether such training is taught in a dedicated course, in a short-term workshop, or whether training is integrated throughout various courses. The unique T/F Method of Taking a Multiple Choice Exam might not help all students, however it has helped enough students that it make learning the method worthwhile.