Tips for Answering Multiple Choice Exam Questions

1. Study! There is no substitute for knowing the correct answer.
2. Read each question carefully to ensure you understand what is being asked.
3. Answer the ones you are most confident about first.
4. Re-phrase the questions in your own words.
5. Be aware of distractors - options that look similar to the correct answer.
6. Cover up the possible responses while you read the stem question.
7. Anticipate the correct answer before looking at the possibilities.
8. If the answer you anticipated appears on the list, circle it and check to make sure there isn’t an even better option.
9. Pay special attention to responses that use absolute words such as “always” or “never.” Also, conditional words like “probably” or “often.”
10. If the answer you anticipated does not appear on the list, take your best guess by a thoughtful process of elimination.

Strategies for making your best guess (if all else fails)*

- Look out for the “all of the above” response. Similarly, “none of the above”
- Double negatives are often used as traps or distractors.
- Check for the rules of grammar. E.g. If the stem question ends with the word “an”, the correct response likely begins with a vowel.
- The longest response is often correct.
- Responses that echo key phrases from the stem question are often correct.

*Remember, these are merely guidelines and will not necessarily apply consistently. Many professors are aware of these biases and construct their exams in an effort to avoid them.