

THE OWLET

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MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS IN MATHS ASSESSMENTS

Multiple choice questions (MCQs) are an integral part of many of the maths assessments from primary school to final year assessments as part of VCE examinations. In the MCQs, a statement or question is followed by four or five responses where the student is expected to choose the best response. These questions are easy to mark and are objective with a correct answer. A wide variety of content can also be tested within a short period of time, making it an attractive option for examiners. In this newsletter, I will discuss how students use MCQs for revision, as well as provide tips and techniques on how to master these types of questions.

MCQs can be designed to assess low level learning outcomes such as recall and comprehension, all the way to high level outcomes such as analysis, evaluation and synthesis. In one assessment, it's possible to encounter all the different difficulty levels, even though the mark allocated per question usually remains the same at one mark. Therefore, by remembering and understanding the basic content and concepts, a student should be able to correctly answer the basic questions quickly, leaving them more time to come up with the correct response to the complex questions. The MCQs in the review section of a text book can also be used to revise the topics since they can be done rather quickly and will give students an idea of where their gaps in knowledge lie and what needs to be focused on.

Only the correct answer will gain a mark for a question, however, in general, an incorrect answer will not result in a negative mark. If this is the case, all the questions in the MCQ section should be completed by selecting a response. However, it's better to make an educated guess rather than a complete guess when choosing a response. Often the distractors or the obvious incorrect answers can be eliminated before choosing between the two closest answers. Sometimes two of the options might be correct, but one is a better choice and must be selected to gain the mark. Reading the prompt or question carefully and in the case of graphs, tables and diagrams, paying close attention to details will help a student choose the correct response.

Generally in the case of VCE assessments, the MCQs appear in the section of the exam where calculators are allowed. Since each question is worth only one mark, efficiency in arriving at the answer is paramount. Identifying whether a question requires the use of a calculator and how to use the calculator to arrive at the answer can save time and avoid careless errors. General Maths 3 and 4 Examination 1, comprises entirely of MCQs. Here, knowing which questions will require the use of a calculator and whether the question will require more time will help manage time under exam conditions.

Sometimes you might have forgotten completely how to solve an equation. In this case, by substituting the given solution options back into the equation, one can arrive at the correct option. Lastly don't keep looking at the later options, if you are certain you have arrived at the correct option in one of the earlier options, this is a waste of time. The success in MCQs depends on planning and preparation and to not panic under exam conditions.