

Getting Ready for the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT)

What is the CAAT?

At MITT, there may be additional admission requirements for mature entrance students, applicants from outside of Canada, or international students. The Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) measures the skill level of applicants in the areas of math and English to help determine readiness for skills development and training. The CAAT testing is not a measure of English language proficiency.

The CAAT is divided into levels. At MITT, applicants may be asked to write Levels C and D.

- Level C measures standard achievement for 7 – 10 years of formal education
- Level D measures standard achievement for 11 – 12+ years of formal education

It should take about two hours to write the CAAT which is all multiple choice questions.

How can I get better at answering multiple choice questions?

There are things you can do to practice for multiple choice tests. The website *Study Guides and Strategies* (Testing with Success series www.studygs.net/tsttak3.htm) has some excellent advice about study strategies. Here is some of what they say about multiple choice tests.

Overall Test Taking Strategies:

- Read the directions carefully
 - Know if each question can have one or more correct option
 - Know if you are penalized for guessing
 - Know how much time is allowed so you can plan your time
- Preview the test
 - Read through the test quickly and answer the easiest questions first — the answers you know for sure
 - Mark or list those you think you might know in a way that is appropriate i.e., that is allowed such as scrap paper
- Read through the test a second time
 - answer the more difficult questions by starting with the ones that you marked you might know
 - you may pick up cues for answers from the first reading of other questions
 - not that as you relax a bit you may feel more confident and comfortable now in the test situation and feel better able to figure out the answers
- Review

- if time allows, review questions and answers as it is possible you misread questions the first time

Strategies for Answering Each Question

Multiple choice questions usually include a phrase or stem followed by three to five optional answers:

For example:

The number 2,400,000 is written: (this is the stem)

(the stem is followed by answer options such as a) to d) below)

- a) Two billion four hundred million
- b) Two million four hundred thousand
- c) Two thousand four hundred million
- d) Two million four thousand

Think critically about each question by trying these individual strategies.

- Cover the options, read the stem, and be sure you are clear about what it is saying. Then try to answer it without looking at the options. Select the option that most closely matches your answer.
- Read the stem with each option.
Treat each option as a true-false question, and choose the "most true"
- Strategies for answering difficult questions:
 - Eliminate options you know to be incorrect
- if allowed, mark words or alternatives in questions that eliminate the option
 - Give each option of a question the "true-false test"
- this may reduce your selection to the best answer
 - Question options that grammatically don't fit with the stem
 - Question options that are totally unfamiliar to you
 - Question options that contain negative or absolute words (See Qualifiers and Negatives on the next page)
- try substituting a qualified term for the absolute one. For example, *frequently* for *always*; or *typical* for *every* to see if you can eliminate an option
 - "All of the above:"

- if you know two of three options seem correct, "all of the above" is a strong possibility
- Answers containing numbers:
 - eliminate the high and low and consider the middle range numbers
- "Look alike options"
 - probably only one is correct; choose the best but eliminate choices that mean basically the same thing, and thus cancel each other out
- Double negatives:
 - create an equivalent positive statement
- Echo options:
 - if two options are opposite each other, chances are one of them is correct
- Favor options that contain qualifiers (see below)
 - because the answer has longer, more inclusive items that better describe the right information
- If two alternatives seem correct, compare them for differences and then try them with the stem to find your best answer.

Guessing

- Always guess when there is no penalty for guessing or you can eliminate options
- Don't guess if you are penalized for guessing and if you have no basis for your choice
- Use hints from questions you know to answer questions you do not
- Change your first answers only when you are sure of the correction, or other information in the test suggests you should change.

Remember that you are looking for the best answer. This means:

- not just a totally correct answer; and
- not one which must be true all of the time in all cases, and without exception.

Here are two great additional tips from Cornell University about qualifiers and negative words. http://lsc.cornell.edu/Sidebars/Study_Skills_Resources/multiplechoicetests.pdf

1. About Qualifiers

Qualifiers are words that alter a statement. Words like *always*, *most*, *equal*, *good*, and *bad*. In a multiple choice test, qualifiers can make an option on a test question be a correct option or an incorrect option.

For example, the following two statements are nearly identical:

It *often* snows in Winnipeg before November.

It *always* snows in Winnipeg before November.

The first statement is true, while the word “always” in the second statement makes it false. Keep careful track of qualifiers by circling one that appears in a test question or in the answer options. To understand qualifiers, you need to know the qualifier families:

- All, most, some, none (no)
- Always , usually, sometimes, never
- Great, much, little, no
- More, equal, less
- Good, bad
- Is, is not

Whenever one qualifier from a family is used in an answer option, substitute each of the others for it in turn. Then you can tell which of the qualifiers fits best. If the best qualifier is the one in the answer option, then the option is true, if the best qualifier is another one from the family, then the answer option is false.

2. About Negatives

Negatives can be words like *no*, *not*, *none* and *never*, or they can be prefixes like *il-*, as in *illogical*, *un-*, as in *uninterested*, *im-* as in *impatient*. Notice negatives because they can reverse the meaning of a sentence. For example, in this answer option, the prefix *in-* in *indistinguishable* causes the statement to be false:

Because it is in the same colour family, Lemon Yellow is indistinguishable from other yellows in most people’s eyes.

Each negative reverses the meaning of a sentence. With two negatives, the question's meaning should be the same as it was without the negatives. For example, the first statement below has no negatives. It is obviously true. The second statement has two negatives. Since each negative reverses the meaning of the sentence, it is also true, but it is harder to identify as true. Try not to write this way but do be aware of it!

It is logical to assume that MITT's growth is because of its excellence in technical training.

It is illogical to assume that MITT's growth is not because of its technical training.

If you would like to read more excellent advice on test taking strategies, check the Social Psychology website at:

www.socialpsychology.org/testtips.htm