

Test-Taking Strategies and Practice

You can improve your test-taking skills by practicing the strategies discussed in this section. First, read the tips in the left-hand column. Then apply them to the practice items in the right-hand column.

Multiple Choice

Florida's End-of-Course Assessment for Civics contains 48 multiple-choice items. Each multiple-choice item will consist of a single stem that asks a question relating to civics. Four possible answer choices will appear below the stem. Only one of these choices is the correct answer. The other choices, called *distracters*, are incorrect.

- 1 Read the stem carefully. Determine what the question is asking.
- 2 Look for key words and facts in the stem. They will help you determine the correct answer.
- 3 Read each answer choice. Eliminate answer choices that you know are incorrect.
- 4 Some stems will include a prompt that will help you answer the question. Read the stem. Then read or study the prompt carefully to select the correct answer choice.
- 5 Watch for words such as *all*, *always*, and *never*. Answers choices that include these words usually are incorrect. These words indicate that the correct answer must be an undisputed fact. In social studies, few facts are undisputed.

answers: 1 (B); 2 (D); 3 (B)

1. One of Montesquieu's ideas strongly influenced the Founding Fathers. Which of the following statements most resembles that idea?

A. People and rulers are partners in a social contract.
 B. There should be separation of powers within a government.
 C. Natural laws are more important than a government's laws.
 D. The ideas of Enlightenment thinkers should be the basis for American education.

Most is a key word. Changing it to "least" would alter the meaning of the stem and call for a different answer.

2. Use the information in the box to answer the question.

Speaker 1 "Everyone is entitled to equal justice under the law."
Speaker 2 "The United States is a government of laws not one person."
Speaker 3 "A person's fate should not rest in the hands of a king."
Speaker 4 "No person is above the law."

Which constitutional principle is being discussed?

- A. individual rights
- B. minority rule
- C. due process
- D. rule of law

3. How is a public-interest group different from a special-interest group?

- A. Public-interest groups are always funded with public or government money.
 - B. Public-interest groups promote the interest of the general public rather than a small part of the public.
 - C. Public-interest groups provide more information to the public than special-interest groups do.
 - D. Public-interest groups represent the interests of a particular group of citizens.
- Absolute words, such as *always*, often signal an incorrect choice.

Primary Sources

Primary sources are materials that have been written or made by people who were at historical events, either as observers or participants. Primary sources include journals, diaries, letters, speeches, newspaper articles, autobiographies, laws, wills, and financial records.

- 1 For quotations and excerpts from texts, be sure to read the source line first. Information about the author and source will help you understand the quotation.
- 2 Skim the quotation or excerpt to get an idea of what it is about. (This is an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence.)
- 3 Next, skim the stem and answer choices. This will help you focus your reading and more easily locate answers.
- 4 Then, read the entire quotation or excerpt carefully. Use active reading strategies. For instance, ask and answer questions on the content as you read.
- 5 Reread the selection if any of it is unclear to you. Use context clues to help you understand unfamiliar words.
- 6 Finally, apply the strategies you learned for answering multiple-choice questions.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government . . .”

1 —from the Declaration of Independence

From the context, you conclude that "unalienable" means "natural".

- 1. Which phrase reveals the Founding Fathers’ beliefs about the source of government power?
 - A. “We hold these truths to be self-evident”
 - B. “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights”
 - C. “to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men”
 - D. “deriving their powers from the consent of the governed”
- 2. Which idea is *best* expressed in this excerpt?
 - A. Montesquieu’s theory of separation of power
 - B. John Locke’s theory of natural rights
 - C. the idea of liberty expressed in the English Bill of Rights
 - D. the idea of limited government expressed in Magna Carta

answers: 1 (D); 2 (B)

Charts

Charts present information in visual form. There are several types of charts, including tables, flow charts, Venn diagrams, and infographics. The chart most commonly found on exams is the table. Tables organize information in columns and rows for easy viewing.

- 1 Read the title and identify the broad subject of the chart.
- 2 Read the column and row headings and any other labels. These will provide more details about the subject of the chart.
- 3 Note how the information in the chart is organized.
- 4 Compare and contrast the information from column to column and row to row.
- 5 Try to draw conclusions from the information in the chart.
- 6 Read the questions carefully and then study the chart again to determine the answers.

1 This chart is about the number and types of presidential vetoes between 1981 and 2008.

4 Notice that the number and types of vetoes differ for each president.

Congressional Bills Vetoed, 1981–2008			
President	Regular Vetoes	Pocket Vetoes	Total Vetoes
Ronald Reagan	39	39	78
George H. W. Bush	29	15	44
William Clinton	36	1	37
George W. Bush	12	0	12

Source: U.S. Senate

3 This chart organizes the presidents chronologically. In some charts, information is organized alphabetically or by the value of the numbers displayed.

5 Think about the trends in vetoes of congressional bills since 1981.

1. According to the chart, who had the most vetoes during his presidential term?
 - A. Ronald Reagan
 - B. George H. W. Bush
 - C. William Clinton
 - D. George W. Bush

2. Which of the following best describes the trend in the number of total vetoes by each president since 1981?
 - A. increased
 - B. decreased
 - C. dropped to zero
 - D. stayed the same

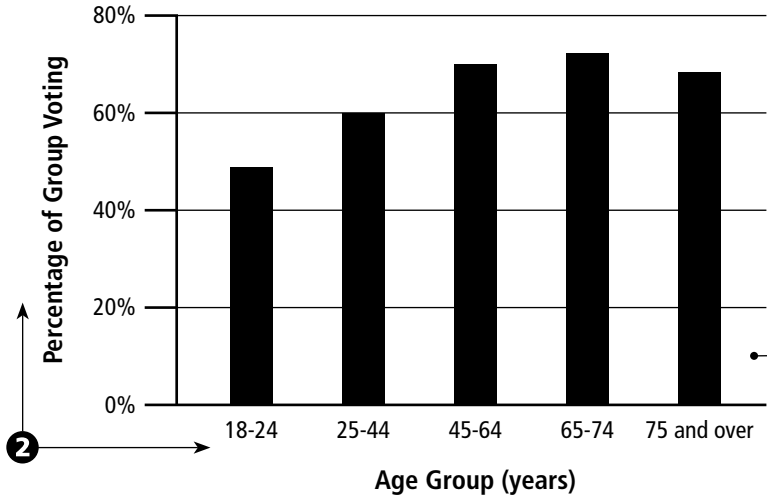
answers: 1 (A); 2 (B)

Graphs

Graphs show statistics in a visual form. Bar graphs make it easy to compare numbers or sets of numbers. Line graphs are useful for showing changes over time. Pie graphs show relationships among the parts of a whole.

- 1 Read the title and identify the broad subject of the graph.
- 2 Study the labels on the vertical and horizontal axes to see the kind of information presented in the graph. Note the intervals between amounts and between dates. This will help you read the graph more efficiently.
- 3 Look at the source line and evaluate the reliability of the information in the graph.
- 4 Draw conclusions and make inferences based on information in the graph.
- 5 Read the questions carefully and then study the graph again to determine the answers.

1 Voter Turnout by Age Group, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

3 Statistics from government sources, such as the U.S. Census Bureau, tend to be reliable.

4 One conclusion you might draw is that older citizens were more likely than younger ones to vote in 2008.

1. According to the graph, which age group had the highest voter turnout?
 - A. 18 to 24 years
 - B. 25 to 44 years
 - C. 45 to 64 years
 - D. 65 to 74 years
2. What percentage of Americans aged 25 to 44 voted in 2008?
 - A. 48.5 percent
 - B. 60.0 percent
 - C. 69.2 percent
 - D. 72.4 percent

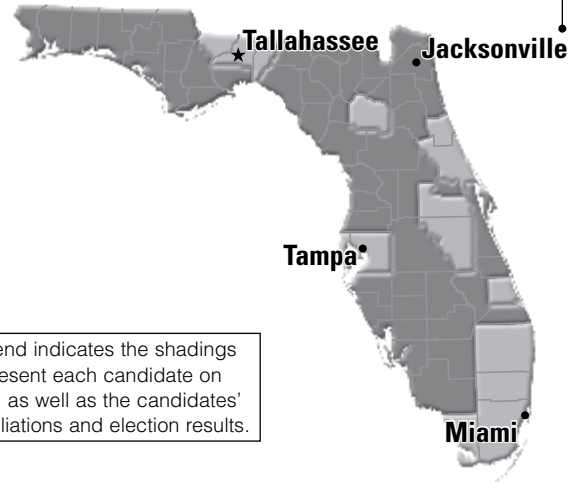
answers: 1 (D); 2 (B)

Maps

There are many different kinds of maps. Three of the most common are physical maps, political maps, and thematic maps. Physical maps are used to display physical features, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans. Political maps show countries and the political divisions within them—states or provinces, for example. They also show the location of major cities. Thematic, or special-purpose, maps focus on a particular topic, such as population density, election results, or major battles in a war. The thematic map on this page shows the results of the 2008 presidential election in Florida.

- 1 Read the title of the map to identify the area shown and the subject covered.
- 2 Examine the labels on the map to find more information on the map's subject.
- 3 Study the legend to find the meaning of any symbols, colors, or shading used on the map.
- 4 Look at the map and try to identify patterns. If included, use the compass rose to determine directions and the scale to determine distance between places shown on the map.
- 5 Read the questions carefully and then study the map again to determine the answers.

1 2008 Election Results in Florida Counties



The labels identify major cities in Florida.

This legend indicates the shadings that represent each candidate on the map, as well as the candidates' party affiliations and election results.

Candidate	Political Affiliation	Counties Won	Popular Votes
Barack Obama	Democratic	15	4,282,074
John McCain	Republican	52	4,045,624
TOTAL		67	8,327,698

— County boundaries

Notice that Barack Obama, who claimed Florida's 27 electoral votes, won more popular votes but fewer counties than John McCain.

1. According to the map, Barack Obama won a block of four counties surrounding which city?
 - A. Jacksonville
 - B. Miami
 - C. Tallahassee
 - D. Tampa
2. What percentage of the popular vote did John McCain win?
 - A. 22 percent
 - B. 49 percent
 - C. 51 percent
 - D. 78 percent

answers: 1 (B); 2 (B)