

Exam tips



Dr Nga Min En
Dept of Pathology
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine

“The brain is the most outstanding organ. It works for 24 hours, 365 days, right from your birth, until you step in the exam hall.”



Outline

- I. Questions
 - Reading
 - Interpreting
- II. Answers
 - Where to start?
 - Where to stop (How much to write)?
 - How to organize?

I. Questions

- A. Reading
 - 3 steps
- B. Interpreting
 - 2 steps

A. Reading questions

- Step 1. Read at least **twice** (until palpitations stop)
 - Underline **keywords**
 - Eg. What are two common causes ?
 - Give the COMMONEST causes, as asked.
 - Don't bother with esoteric answers (may lose you marks).
 - Eg. Describe the gross and microscopic morphologic features.

TIP: Do NOT over-interpret or try to second guess the examiner's intent – your first impression is usually correct.
Examiners try to word questions as clearly as possible.

A. Reading questions

- Step 2. Read the **WHOLE** question first - all parts
 - On paper exams, this is easy.
 - In E-exams, navigate through **all question parts** first before answering
 - **Why?**
 - Sometimes students 'over-answer' earlier parts, and then they have to write the answer all over again when the question is actually asked in a later part of the question

A. Reading questions

- Step 3. Look at the **marks** allocated.
 - This is very important – gives you a gauge as to how much to write
 - Also look at the **wording** of the question to gauge how long your answer should be (covered later)

TIP: If the first question is very difficult, DON'T PANIC → move to the next question first and come back to it later

I. Questions

- A. Reading
 - 3 steps
- B. Interpreting
 - 2 steps

B. Interpreting questions

1. **Understand** commonly used **terms**:

- Short answers generally expected:
 - Name
 - List
 - State
- Longer answers generally expected:
 - Describe
 - How
 - Explain
 - Discuss
 - Outline (some explanation but not too long)

B. Interpreting questions

2. **What** is the question actually asking?

- “Pathogenesis of “
 - Inciting event and sequence of events/abnormal pathologic processes that lead to the disease
- “Clinical manifestations”
 - Signs and symptoms
- “What is the diagnosis”
 - Simply state the diagnosis, not the mechanism or the description but the actual clinical diagnosis

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 - C. How to organize?

II. Answers: A. Where to start?

- THINK
 - What is the question asking (look at the wording)
- PLAN
 - For essay type questions
 - Do a rough outline - state your headings first + subheadings
 - Ensures you don't miss major points
 - Helps you pace your answer – don't spend too much time on one section

TIP: Additional 2 minutes spent thinking and planning are well worth it

II. Answers:

B. Where to stop (How much to write)?


- Clues to length of answer expected:
 - Question wording – name/list etc vs describe/discuss etc
 - Mark allocation
- If question asks for TWO points → don't give more
 - Examiners usually look at first two and ignore the rest
 - Write as **different** points as possible – try not to give variations of the same point – this may lose you marks
 - Eg: Name two imaging modalities
 - 1. Ultrasound
 - 2. Doppler ultrasound
- Stay relevant – DO NOT go off point
 - You will NOT get marks for length alone
 - How to stay relevant? → **Read the question again**


Not ideal

II. Answers:

C. How to organize?

- Essay/MEQ questions with long answers:
 - Point form is usually acceptable unless explicitly discouraged
 - Answer **in sections with headings** if long answer
 - **Highlight** key points if long answer
- Short answers eg. Name
 - Name: Give the **full name, fully spelled** rather than abbreviation. Don't omit words

Eg. Acute myocardial infarction  2/2

Eg. Myocardial infarction / MI / AMI  1.5/2

- Short answers: eg. List ... state **most important** items first, if asked to list
- List vertically – you don't want examiners to miss any points if they are all squeezed in one long sentence!

Eg. List 4 risk factors for atherosclerosis

Not preferred:

Obesity, hypelipidaemia, hypertension, diabetes mellitus

Preferred:

- Obesity
- Hyperlipidaemia
- Hypertension
- Diabetes mellitus

Additional notes

- **Keep calm** – skip palpitation-inducing questions and come back to them later
- **Examiners** have to mark hundreds of scripts and are prone to **fatigue and boredom**
 - Help yourself → making your answers clear, concise and relevant
 - Organise and provide headings, highlight
 - Keep sentences short and simple

Recap

- I. Questions
 - A. Reading
 - 3 steps
 - Highlight keywords
 - Read WHOLE question first
 - Check out MARKS allocated
 - B. Interpreting
 - Learn and Understand common terms
- II. Answers
 - A. Where to start?
 - THINK and PLAN
 - B. Where to stop (How much to write)?
 - Question wording and marks
 - C. How to organize?
 - Long ans: Sequential flow; Headings
 - List: Most important first

Parting shots

- Faculty understand that studying is not easy ...
 - We were full-time students once

Student + dying = Studying



“Well, tests ain't fair. Those that study have an unfair advantage. It's always been that way.”

— [Allan Dare Pearce](#), [Paris in April](#)

To put things into perspective

At the end of the day, there is a patient waiting for you.



Study for him or her!



All the best and happy learning!

