



## Top 15 CIA<sup>®</sup> Exam-Taking Tips

1. **Read the question first.** If you encounter a question with multiple paragraphs of introduction and detail, skip to the end and read the question first. You may not need all the detail provided. This will save you time and help you focus on what details are important when you go back and read the introduction.
2. **Understand the question.** Read the question two or three times to really understand what's being asked. Look for clues such as "most," "all," "except," or "not." Watch for negatively worded questions — they can be tricky.
3. **Identify your answer before reading the choices.** After reading the question, try to identify what you believe the answer will be before reading the choices. By doing this, you will more likely have one answer stand out as being correct or one or more answers that can be eliminated.
4. **Eliminate obvious distractors.** For most questions, there are four possible answers. They typically consist of two distractors that appear to be incorrect, one that is likely to be plausible but incorrect, and then one correct answer. The following tips may also help to narrow down the correct answer:
  - When you first read a question, you generally should be able to eliminate two of the answers as incorrect.
  - Look for absolute words such as "always" and "never." Rarely do situations fall into those categories.
  - If two or more options are identical, then both responses must be incorrect.
  - If two options are opposites, then at least one of them may be eliminated.
  - Select the option that is the most inclusive.
5. **Use "educated guesses."** In any exam situation, it is quite possible to be confronted by questions that seem totally or partially unfamiliar. Or you may be faced with the situation of too many unanswered items and too little time to complete the exam. In both situations, your best option is to guess. While guessing is not a recommended tactic for the bulk of the exam, it is a better practice than leaving difficult or remaining items blank. There is a 0% chance of getting an unanswered item correct; choosing one answer gives you a 25% chance of getting it right. There are two kinds of guessing:
  - Blind guessing applies to those situations in which you are completely unfamiliar with the item.
  - Informed guessing describes the process of guessing after having eliminated one or more of the options on the basis of partial familiarity. The probability of making a correct guess increases with every option you successfully eliminate.
6. **Trust your first impressions.** There is a correct answer to each question. It is widely believed that your first impression of the correct answer will be a better choice. Additionally, if particular answers are wrong, eliminate them immediately. This will help to narrow down the choices and increase your score.
7. **If uncertain, mark and return.** If you cannot decide on an answer, select your best guess then mark the question and return to it later. It is possible that later questions may trigger information useful for those "undecided" questions. The computer allows you to skip or mark questions and return

to them at the end of the exam if you still have time. You can experience this feature in the CIA Practice Exam found in the online portion of The IIA's CIA Learning System. However, try not to leave anything blank at the end of the exam.

8. **Don't stop.** If you are stumped by a question, continue on to the next item. Otherwise, you may lose valuable time and have to rush through the remaining questions. This is sometimes referred to as paralysis by analysis. Exercise good time management throughout the CIA exam, budgeting approximately one minute per question.
9. **Don't look for answer patterns.** The psychometric testing process used by The IIA ensures that questions do not fall into patterns. Contrary to some myths, "c" will not necessarily be the most frequent answer, and the first answer may be correct.
10. **Length of an answer is a false clue.** One test-taking myth is that the longer an answer, the more likely it is to be correct. However, it often is more difficult for question writers to write incorrect "distractors" than the correct answer, so it is just as likely that the longest answer is incorrect.
11. **Review your answers.** After going through all the questions on the exam, go back and answer the questions you flagged or omitted the first time. The exam software will highlight any marked or uncompleted questions. Be sure to answer all questions even if you are unsure of the correct answer.
12. **Budget your time and don't rush.** There are no points for finishing first. Use the time allowed for the exam to give yourself sufficient time to review and check your answers. You have 2.5 hours to complete 125 questions on Part 1; and 2 hours to complete 100 questions on Parts 2 and 3. This means you have 72 seconds per question. The IIA's CIA Learning System software times you against the pace of the exam and gives you an indication of whether you are on pace to complete the exam in the time allotted.
13. **Be well-rested for the test.** Don't pull an "all-nighter" to prepare for the test. It is better to get enough sleep so you will be relaxed and able to reason through difficult or unfamiliar questions. Also, allow plenty of time to get to the test center so you arrive relaxed, confident, and ready to test. If you choose online proctoring, be sure your room is set up as per exam instructions well before your exam.
14. **Be prepared.** Study the material and be confident in your ability to pass the test. Eat a good meal before the test. Your objective is to concentrate on the questions and not be distracted by physical needs. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes. Dress in layers to ensure your comfort. The fewer the distractions, the more you can concentrate on the exam.
15. **Take breaks.** This may be done in your seat during the exam. If you are feeling stressed or tired, simply close your eyes for a few seconds, practice some relaxation techniques, and then refocus your attention.