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De-Coding Different Types Of Test Questions

It's helpful to understand the kinds of question that are asked on a test, because the response you need to come up with depends on the type of question. Knowing about different types of test questions can help you activate appropriate strategies for formulating answers and reduce test-taking anxiety.

Test questions generally fall into one of three categories:

"Green Light"

- Go right ahead!
- These are factual questions, and the answers are straight-forward. You either know the answer or you don't; it's right there in your head or it's not.
- Some green light questions can be very difficult, and your ability to recall details is often tested with this type of question.
- Study for this type of question by using recitation, making flash cards, quizzing yourself or a study partner, etc.
- If you don't know the answer to a green light question right away, circle it and move on; often the answer will pop into your head later on during the test.

"Yellow Light"

- Slow down.
- These questions are more detailed than green light questions, but are based on the same idea: you either know the answer or you don't.
- Often you'll have to put multiple or "green light" details together.
- Similar strategies work for yellow and green questions, but with yellow light questions you'll need to recall many ideas, concepts, formulas, etc., just to answer one question.

"Red Light"

- Hold on.
- These questions ask you to make inferences or apply your knowledge to new situations, which is sometimes called "critical thinking".
- You need to know the material being covered to answer these questions at the "green light" level, but the test question is not asking you to simply regurgitate it. You will need to take what you know and use it in ways you have not yet used it.
- This type of question sometimes flummoxes students, because they are surprised to they are being asked a question that wasn't exactly covered in class. Remember that with red light questions you are not supposed to already know the answer. You have to *come up* with the answer yourself, it is not already in your head. (You will need to know the basic information, though, to be able to answer this type of question.)
- Red light questions are asked more frequently in college than in high school.
- To study for red light questions, make diagrams or concept maps that link ideas or topics from the course together. Think about how what you're learning relates to what you've learned in other classes. Sit down with friends or classmates and talk about how one might use information from the class in a job setting.

(Question-Answer-Relationship model developed by Taffy Raphael, University of Chicago.)

Practice test question decoding:

Question:	**Red, yellow, or green?**	**Why?**
1. What is bootstrapping? Explain.		
2. A regression equation for y=handspan (cm) and x=height (in) is expressed with the following formula: Average height= 51.1 + 0.7(Handspan) Interpret the slope of 0.7 in terms of how height changes as handspan increases.		
3. Use Weber's definition of power to explain the rise of Al Qaeda in the 21st century.		
4. Draw a diagram that shows how mastication affects the surface size of food particles. Then, explain the importance of surface area to the assimilation of nutrients.		
5. Botox (*Botulinum* toxin, the most toxic substance known) is a protein complex that prevents the fusion of acetylcholine-containing vesicles to the plasma membrane at the synaptic terminal of motor neurons. Which of the following correctly describes the state of the myosin binding sites on actin after treatment with Botox? a) the myosin binding sites on actin are constantly exposed, but myosin cannot bind. b) the myosin binding sites on actin are constantly exposed, and myosin stays bound to the exposed sites. c) the myosin binding sites are constantly covered , and myosin is prevented from binding. d) The exposure and covering of the myosin binding site on actin will not be affected by Botox.		
6. Do organizations with the best Human Resources Departments have the most effective teams? Explain your answer.		