

Guidelines for Constructing Multiple Choice Questions

Questions (Stem) construction:

- ☑ Question should be as clear and direct as possible (avoid extraneous information)
- ☑ Provide as much information as possible with as few words as possible
- ☑ Avoid negative wording if possible, emphasize if used
- ☑ Avoid trick questions that mislead or potentially deceive
- ☑ Instruct students to choose “best answer” if appropriate
- ☑ Know what you want to test (e.g., think about the competency/learning objective you want to assess THEN write the item)
- ☑ Test for only one concept/idea per question
- ☑ Begin the test with a few quick and easy questions
- ☑ Avoid trivial details; rather test important information, concepts or abilities.
- ☑ Balance the difficulty level of your test questions
 - Number of easy and progressively more challenging questions should allow for separation of students (A from B from C from F)
 - Easy questions test a student’s knowledge
 - Medium difficulty questions test comprehension
 - Harder question test a student’s ability to apply concepts and do analysis

Alternatives (Item) construction:

- ☑ Avoid patterns in location and length of correct answer
- ☑ Check carefully for grammatical and spelling errors especially in the distractors
- ☑ Avoid answering one question in the test by giving the answer somewhere else in the test
- ☑ Present alternative in a logical order (chronological, numerical, etc.)
- ☑ All alternatives should be unambiguous
- ☑ Use “none of the above” with caution – you will never know if the student knows the correct answer
- ☑ Use “all of the above” with caution – students need only recognize two correct options or one incorrect option
- ☑ Avoid the use of absolutes - “always”, “never”, “all” or “none”
- ☑ All distractors should be plausible
- ☑ Alternatives should be mutually exclusive and not overlapping
- ☑ Distractor recommendations:
 - Common misconceptions
 - Common mistakes
 - True statements that do not answer the question
 - Use the same technical words or phrases in the distractor as you would in a correct answer
 - Language and length of distractors should mirror language and length of correct answers