

Writing Quality Questions

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Test Question Considerations

- Grading: essay/short answer style takes longer to grade, but can assess higher levels of learning
- Multiple choice: easy to grade, but hard to write good questions. Common in CBL's as can grade and track completion
- Fill in the blank: good for math or questions with one single answer, but hard to have only one answer
- Guessing; able to guess true/false (50/50), matching and multiple choice
- Drag and Drop: good for ordering steps, but may be confusing and context specific
- Audio/Video: need access to sound and video
- Complex questions, ex. Bow-tie assess all levels

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General Guidelines



The question has:

- ☐ Items relate to objectives/ outcomes/ content
- ☐ Is at the same level of learning as the objectives/outcomes
- ☐ Contains only relevant information and not excess information
- ☐ Items are independent of each other
- ☐ Ask for a correct answer (not a wrong or negative answer)

The questions is readable:

- ☐ Clear, focused
- ☐ Understandable, flows
- ☐ Reading level doesn't test the person's reading ability

The questions has:

- ☐ Consistent/correct grammar and punctuation
- ☐ Consistent use of present/past tense
- ☐ Subject-verb agreement
- ☐ Choices that end in periods (or not)

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General Guidelines



The question does not have:

- ☐ Acronyms, abbreviations, brand names, proper names or jargon
- ☐ Negative wording (not, incorrect, except) or "double negatives"
- ☐ Offensive, biased or unfair references
- ☐ Cuing terms (may, could or can)
- ☐ Absolute or extreme terms (never, always, only, all, none)
- ☐ Vague terms (frequently, occasionally, rarely, usually, commonly)
- ☐ Answers/options in one item that lead to an answer in another item

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MCQ: Stem



Tip: begin the stem with "what" instead of which of the following

Stem: does the question

- ☐ Stand alone
- ☐ End in a question mark (not a completion statement)
- ☐ Pose a question or problem
- ☐ Have the question in the stem (i.e. do not need to read the options to determine the question)

Stem: the question should not

- ☐ Use "all except"
- ☐ Contain a fill in the blank
- ☐ Be double-barrels, i.e. ask about 2 points (this error usually contains the word "and")

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MCQ: Options



Options have. . .

- ☐ Choices that are a consistent in length (correct answer should not be the longest /detailed)
- ☐ Accurate distractors (do not fully meet the requirements of the problem)
- ☐ A logical order (numerical, alphabetical or chronological)
- ☐ Correct answers that vary in placement (ex. "C" is not always the correct answer)
- ☐ Only one best answer
- ☐ Three to five choices
- ☐ Distractors that are common incorrect answers

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MCQ: Options

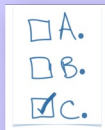


Options should NOT have:

- ☐ Repeating words in each option
- ☐ Implausible, trivial, or nonsensical distractors
- ☐ "All of the above" or "none of the above"
- ☐ Overlapping alternatives (ex. 1-3 & 3-4, should be 1-2 & 3-4)
- ☐ "Multiple-multiples" or a series of true/false statements

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MCQ: Options



Tips for distractors

- ☐ Use: Predictable errors, common misconceptions, clinical errors, related ideas, and common mistakes
- ☐ Don't use opposites, for example hyper-a, *hypo-a*, hyper-b, hyper-c
- ☐ Multiple Choice: 3-5 options
Multiple Response: 5-10 option

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Question Shell

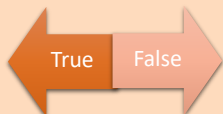
A (age, preexisting condition, gender) is brought to the (location) (complaining of, with injuries showing symptoms of) (as a result of). Initial (treatment, intervention, diagnosis, laboratory studies, etc.), (consists of, is, are, include):

A staff person in class is interrupting frequently, rolling her eyes and sighing. She is required to attend this class. Initial action by the instructor is:

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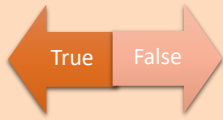
True/False



- ☐ Have only one concept per statement
- ☐ Use simple, positive declarative sentences
- ☐ Have true and false questions in a random order (no pattern)
- ☐ Statements must be absolutely true or false (no shades of gray); each part of the statement must be true for the item to be true.
- ☐ The lead-in statement for a true false list should be closed and focused
- ☐ Tests comprised of T/F items has to have a large number to be reliable

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True/False

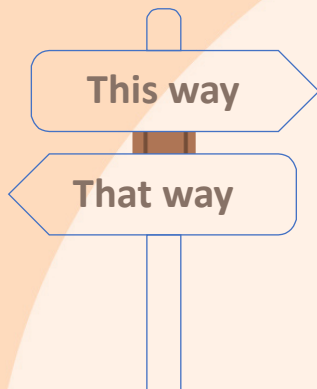


❑ Avoid

- Imprecise phrases (associated with, is useful for, is important)
- Cueing (may, could be)
- Vague terms (usually, frequently, sometimes, typically)
- Exact wording from instructional material

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Forced True/False



- ❑ Two item forced choice generally has a true/false statement as one option along with a complementary statement of a contrasting viewpoint
- ❑ Has true and false statements of equal length

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