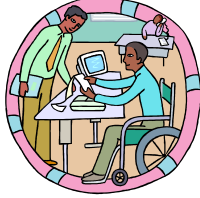


- 4.2.5 What are the best methods of writing multiple choice test items?



Ruder & Schafer, 2002, pp. 56-64

1

What are the best methods of writing multiple-choice test items?

- What are some terms associated with writing multiple-choice test items?
 - 1. **stem:** “is the introductory question or incomplete statement at that beginning of each item that is followed by options”
 - 2. **options:** the correct answer and distractors.
 - 3. **distractors:** incorrect answers that might look tempting to the test taker
 - » (Rudner & Schafer, 2002, p. 57)

2

- General guidelines for developing multiple choice questions
 - 1. clear
 - 2. concise
 - 3. correct answers
 - 4. conceivable competing distractors

3

- Planning to write multiple choice items
 - 1. Outline course content
 - relate to the course objectives (behavioral terms)
 - relate to individual planning needs if appropriate (IEP, etc.)
 - 2. Daily take time to...
 - develop questions or
 - make notes on what was taught
 - 3. Develop a test bank of questions over time

4

- Actions to writing quality multiple-choice test items
 - 1. Write stems
 - 2. Write options

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- 1. Write stems
 - A. Determine one point to be assessed by each item.
 - B. Develop a stem that is an incomplete statement or a direct question
 - C. Avoid stereotyped phraseology.

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- D. Only include purposeful/functional words
- E. Provide more information in the stem rather than in the options
- F. Use positively stated stems as much as possible

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- G. Maintain grammatical consistency between the stem and the options
- H. Avoid providing elements of the answer in the stem and option
- I. Provide enough information to make the question meaningful

8

- J. Use straightforward, simple sentences
- K. Avoid “never,” “all,” “none,” and “always”
- J. Avoid questions that begin with “Which of the following is true [false]?”
 - may lead to trivial answers
 - may lead to obvious answers

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- L. Do try to write questions that get at higher order thinking for example...
 - Bloom’s Taxonomy
 - » Knowledge
 - » Comprehension
 - » Application
 - » Analysis
 - » Synthesis
 - » Evaluation

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- 2. Writing options
 - A. Write 3-4 options.
 - B. Develop distractors that are equal in...
 - Length
 - Complexity
 - Grammatical form

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- C. Avoid confusing options with...
 - None of the above (sometimes may be appropriate)
 - Both a. and e. above
 - All of the above
- D. Vary the position of the correct option
 - Flip a coin to determine position
- E. When possible, have colleagues with expertise review your tests

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- F. Avoid obviously absurd answers
- G. List options vertically
- H. Label options with capital letters
- I. Attend to the appropriate/consistent punctuation and capitalization

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- J. Avoid negative options
 - Double negatives may be confusing to students
- K. Don't repeat stem in options
- L. Avoid typos that give away an answer
- M. Develop options within the same category
 - For example, option "D" is not the same
 - A. Blue
 - B. Red
 - C. Green
 - D. Car

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