

Written Test Items

Multiple Choice

Multiple choice items consist of a stem and options, among which there is one correct answer and more than one distracter. Write the stem in the form of a direct question or incomplete statement that measures only one learning outcome.

- Use a clear, brief stem that contains most of the wording.
- Do not place repeated words in the choices.
- Write positive statements.
- If negative statements are used, emphasize the negative word using special character formatting such as underline, boldface, or italics.
- Avoid grammatical clues to the correct answer.
- The best answer should be clearly the most correct of all the options.
- Distracters must all be plausible.
- Do not include choices that are obviously wrong or humorous.
- Make all choices close to the same length.
- Avoid “None of the Above” or “All of the Above” answers.
- Place each choice on a separate line and arrange choices in a single column

True-False

For true-false items, true statements should be based on facts and false statements should be based on common misconceptions of facts. Create brief and simply stated items that deal with a single concept and require a student to think about what they have learned, rather than merely remember it.

- Write words “True” and “False” at the left margin when answers will be marked on the test paper.
- Write instructions that direct students to draw a circle around the answer they select.
- Avoid words that provide a clue to the answer.
- Avoid specific determiners that lead to true statements (“sometimes,” “generally,” “usually,” “often”) or lead to false statements (“always,” “never,” “all,” “none”).
- Avoid trick or misleading items and double-negative items.
- Avoid command statements.
- Avoid unusually long or short items.
- Avoid quoting verbatim from the textbook.

Matching

For matching tests, create two parallel columns of words, phrases, images, or a combination of these. For every item in the “Problem” column there should be one matching response in the “Response” column. Instructions should indicate whether a response may be used more than once.

- Prepare more responses than problem statements to reduce selection by elimination.
- Place appropriate titles at the head of each column.
- Number the problem statements and place a blank line in front of each problem statement unless a separate answer sheet will be used.
- Use letters for each response.
- Arrange problems in systematic manner (alphabetically, chronologically, numerically).
- Avoid giving clues to answers in either the problem statements or the responses.
- Do not include responses that are obviously wrong.

Short Answer/Completion

Short answer items consist of a question that requires an answer of one word or a short phrase. Completion items consist of an incomplete statement with key word(s) eliminated and the missing word or phrase represented with a blank line. Create short, concise, and direct statements so that only one answer is possible. One strategy for this is to start with a direct question and change it to an incomplete statement.

- Avoid long, involved statements with a string of blanks to fill.
- Ensure the answer is a key point in a lesson.
- Arrange the statement to place the blank at or near the end of the sentence.
- Avoid statements that call for answers with more than one word, phrase, or number.
- Eliminate clues in the statement (using longer or shorter blanks, using words such as “a” or “an” preceding the blank).

Essay

For essay questions, first write an outline of the acceptable responses to use as a guide for scoring. Clearly define the task to be completed when responding to each question. Give thorough and specific directions that designate the time to spent on each question and length of the expected response.

Interpretive

Interpretive items are used to test comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Create introductory material such as a paragraph describing a situation or scenario; numerical data; an illustration, graph, table, chart, diagram, or map (for the purpose of this group activity, use the introductory material provided by the instructor). Create test items based on the introductory material.

- Ensure introductory material is relevant to learning objectives being measured, brief, and concise as possible.
- Introductory material should be unfamiliar to students and should require them to apply learned responses from a similar situation.
- Items may be any type.
- Apply rules for effective test item construction for each type of test item.
- Answers should not be contained in introductory material.
- Ensure that items cannot be answered without the introductory material.

Oral Test Items

Oral tests require students to verbally respond to spoken questions. They are usually given one-on-one between instructor and student and are often used in conjunction with psychomotor performance tests. Questions may be either closed, requiring only a single brief answer, or open, permitting longer answers that may lead to further questions and/or discussion.

- Base oral questions on standard criteria and performance objectives.
- Ensure that questions clearly state what students are to describe.
- Validate oral questions by asking questions of other faculty, experts, and students before using in actual testing conditions.
- Revise and update questions as necessary.

Performance Test Items

Performance tests are used to confirm psychomotor skills learning. They should be administered under controlled conditions and should specify the performance objectives to be measured. Always select the rating factors on which a test will be judged.

- Consider combining several basic skills to reduce time required for administration.
- Rate students against a uniform standard, not against the performance of other students.
- Design a rating form that includes:
 - Student's approach to a standard job or procedure
 - Care shown in handling tools, equipment, and materials
 - Demonstration of accuracy
 - Time required to complete the procedure safely
- Prepare a written set of instructions for students to read and an oral explanation for the instructor to provide.