

Writing effective multiple-choice questions

MCQs tips and guidance

Use simple sentence structure and precise wording

- Write questions in a simple structure that is easy to understand
- Avoid extremes – never, always, only

Keep answer choices a similar length

- Often the longest answer is the correct one. If you can't get all four answers to the same length, use two short and two long.

Make wrong answer choices should be reasonable

- Nonsense/obvious wrong choices detract from the test's validity

Avoid 'all of the above' and 'none of the above'

- Can encourage guessing
- Decreases validity, i.e.
 - With 'all of the above' – e.g. If there are four options and the learner can rule out one of the options (and therefore also rule out 'all of the above') they now have 50/50 chance of guessing correctly with the two remaining options, and you can't tell if the learner really knew the correct answer
 - If 'none of the above' is the correct option, you can't actually tell if the learner really knew the correct answer or not

Reduce the number of options if you need to!

- Having three valid options (one correct + two common mistakes/misconceptions) is better than making up nonsense answers or including 'all of the above' / 'none of the above' – this way you can provide meaningful feedback for each option if selected.

Test understanding and critical thinking, not just recall

- Ask learners to interpret facts, evaluate situations, explain cause and effect, make inferences, and predict results.

Include feedback for choices

- To successfully transfer learning to a new context learners must be able to appraise 'why' the answer is correct or incorrect, beyond just right and wrong.

References:

Brame, C. Vanderbilt University (2013) Writing good multiple choice test questions, [Writing Good Multiple Choice Test Questions | Center for Teaching | Vanderbilt University](#)

Brigham Young University (2001), 14 Rules for Writing Multiple Choice Questions, [Microsoft Word - Handouts - 14 Rules for Writing Multiple-Choice Questions.. \(byu.edu\)](#)

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