HOW TO WRITE GOOD MCQs

Tips for writing clear, effective MCQs.

“The most important thing to keep in mind when you develop test questions is that your job as an educator is to teach people so that they can learn and be successful. The idea is not to trick the learner, or test them, or dazzle them with your brilliance.”

(Writing Effective Questions. The Learning Management Corporation)

01 WRITE THE STEM

Use complete sentences that end in a question mark

- What is a dermatome?
- A dermatome is _________.

Make the question as short as possible

- Where is cerebrospinal fluid made?
- Where is cerebrospinal fluid, which helps protect and support the brain, made?

Avoid using true/false questions

- How many layers comprise the meninges?
- Meninges have three layers. Is this statement true or false?

02 WRITE CORRECT ANSWER

The answer should be clear and concise

03 WRITE THE DISTRACATORS

Have 3–4 plausible answer choices (including the right answer)

Ensure your distractors are grammatically correct and are about the same length as the correct answer

04 REVIEW AND REVISE

Be aware of giving away the correct answer (include a check against other MCQs)

Order answer choices alphabetically/numerically

Check the stems and answer choices are grammatically correct

Check the stems and answer choices are written clearly

05 SEEK FEEDBACK

It’s invaluable to have a second pair of eyes look over your questions!

- Can the reviewer easily guess the correct answer without first seeing the question?
- Does the reviewer think a question is irrelevant?
- Do they understand what the question is asking?

Acknowledgments
Developing and Validating Multiple-Choice Test Items - T. H. Haladyna
Writing Effective Questions - The Learning Management Corporation
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