

Test Question Development

Rules for Writing Test Questions

1. The majority of questions should be multiple choice. These rules apply to multiple choice but should also be applied when developing other question types. Question types may also include:
 - a. True-False
 - b. Yes-No
 - c. Matching
 - d. Fill in the blank
2. Questionmark template allows for 5 choices. We should focus on 4 choices where possible but 5 are permissible.
3. The question (item) should focus on important on-the-job objectives. The information for the item should be important to job performance. The question should involve an aspect of knowledge that is relevant, realistic, and practical. It should test a participant's ability to apply the knowledge rather than the ability to remember some rule or policy. Should not have a place in your test just because it is in the course material.
4. The central problem should be clearly stated and contain enough information and be stated in such a way that the participants know exactly what is being asked.
5. Just the right amount of information should be used to state the central problem. Extra info increases reading time and may actually confuse the participant.
 - a. Too much – NASIS 6.0 is being developed to replace NASIS 5.4. What type of database is NASIS 6.0?
 - b. Better – What type of database is NASIS 6.0?
6. A generic term, a word or phrase that refers to all choices and appears after the interrogative word ("What" or "which" of the following) and before the verb, should be used in the question.
 - a. Poor – What are the standards used in the National Cooperative Soil Survey?
 - b. Better – What are the national standards used in the National Cooperative Soil Survey?

The word "national" is an appropriate generic term since all correct choices the question is looking for are at the national level.

7. It is best that there be only ONE correct answer for each item. You must be sure that the distracters you use are not correct and that the correct answer listed as a choice is the only correct answer possible. If the question asks for more than one correct answer, make sure you follow the same guideline shown here.
8. Each item must be supported by a specific and complete reference. This should be entered accurately on the Item Record Card. Anyone and everyone should be able to use this reference and find the reference in your course handbook materials (word, pdf, ppt, etc. files) provided to the participants.

9. Distracter must be plausible but not correct.
 - a. Example;
Which of the following kinds of map units has 2 components and can be separated at the scale of mapping?
 - i. Consociation
 - ii. Complex
 - iii. Series
 - iv. Association

Choice iii is obviously not a kind of map unit and is obviously incorrect. Hence, the examinee has only 3 choices to guess from instead of four, increasing the odds for guessing.

10. Choices should be responsive to the stem of the question. Those that are not responsive are those that do not logically answer the question asked.
11. Choices should all be similar (parallel) in content and style of language so that none stand out as being different. Choices that stand out increase the chance of guessing the correct answer.
12. Choices should be approximately the same length to ensure that all choices are presented in the same general form and that the correct choice, whether longer or shorter than the distracters, does not stand out.
13. Do not provide clues to correct answers. This is done when a key word or phrase in the question is used in the correct answer and not in any of the distracters.
14. Negative items should be avoided. Seeking a negative answer is counter to what we want them to learn and remember and will cross up the learner's way of thinking.
15. We will no longer use inclusive answers. Examples of these are:
 - a. All of the above
 - b. A and C above

Item Record Card for Authoring Questions

The attached Item Record Card is a facsimile of the form to be used. The actual document will be provided as a fillable pdf form. Complete the form fully, one form per test question. Rename the file by adding your initials and the module number for that course to make it unique from others you and other instructors will submit for the course.

Reference

Tips for Test Developers: How to Write and Revise Test Questions, Stanley II, Paul P., and John L. Kammrath, Air Force Occupational Measurement Squadron, August 23, 1995

Item Record Card		Course Name	
		Module Name	
Author		Date Prepared	
Source Reference			
Stem			
Choices			
[Indicate correct answer(s) by clicking on appropriate checkbox]			
A.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
B.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
C.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
D.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
E.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Revision 1			
Author		Date Revised	
Source Reference			
Stem			
Choices			
[Indicate correct answer(s) by clicking on appropriate checkbox]			
A.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
B.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
C.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
D.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
E.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Revision 2			
Author		Date Revised	
Source Reference			
Stem			
Choices			
[Indicate correct answer(s) by clicking on appropriate checkbox]			
A.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
B.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
C.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
D.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
E.	<input type="checkbox"/>		