

CONSTRUCTING MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Multiple-choice questions seem to be many teachers' preferred testing method in that they are relatively easy to correct and grade. The construction of good MC questions does require some thought and planning. The following are simple guidelines:

I. Presenting the question or problem

The 'stem' of a MC question is the statement for which a choice of response is to be made. The stem has to be

- Clearly stated;
- Composed of complete statements;
- Comprehensive enough so that the subsequent choices can be brief;
- Succinctly stated.

Examples of well-stated stems:

- The term 'Native Americans' refers to which of the following groups?"
- The U.S. president's election is determined by"

Examples of poorly stated stems:

- Fluctuations in the stock market....
- Unsupervised school children....

II. Determining response options

Typically, MC questions will include 4-5 response options. To be effective, response options should

- Include only one completely correct and defensible option;
- Include only choices that are logically connected to the stem;
- Include choices that represent misconceptions previously expressed by students;
- Include choices that are mutually exclusive;
- Avoid 'all of the above' or 'none of the above'.

Formatting of response options is important and should strive to

- Approximate uniform length of items;
- Use uniform grammatical structures (all sentences, all phrases, etc.);
- Use a consistent number of options for all questions;
- State options positively, whenever possible;
- Distribute the correct option randomly among the choices (not all correct answers should be 'B', etc.);
- Eliminate verbal cues flowing directly from the stem.