

## Item Writing Guidelines Summary

Source: Classroom Assessment: What Teachers Need to Know -by- J. Popham

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SHORT-ANSWER ITEMS</b></p> <p>Definition - a student generated written response to an item -- verbal (word, phrase or a sentence), not figurative (not diagrams or pictures), shorter than an essay</p> <p>How to achieve validity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Define criteria for scoring within instructions</li> <li>❖ Use direct questions vs. incomplete statements</li> <li>❖ Construct the item so the answer will be concise &amp; precise.</li> <li>❖ Blank placement is important</li> <li>❖ Put blanks at the end of incomplete statements.</li> <li>❖ Limit answer space or blanks to foster "concision"</li> <li>❖ Keep all lines the same length</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MATCHING ITEMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Employ homogeneous lists (questions and answers are parallel, e.g., Definitions/vocabulary; Presidents with their challenges)</li> <li>❖ Use brief lists (not more than 10; shorter words on the right)</li> <li>❖ More responses than premises (put in extras making sure there are no unintentional clues)</li> <li>❖ Order logically (sequence chronologically or alphabetically)</li> <li>❖ Describe basis for matching (describe the relationship you want the student to find)</li> <li>❖ Place on single page</li> <li>❖ Matching is not appropriate for distinct ideas; all items must be related</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PERFORMANCE TASK ITEMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Make sure the task is realistically possible in terms of cost, space, time, and equipment needed.</li> <li>❖ Make sure the student's performance at the task will generalize to comparable tasks.</li> <li>❖ Make the task something the student might encounter in the real world, not just at school.</li> <li>❖ Make the task measure multiple skills, not just one.</li> <li>❖ Make the task one that the student can become more proficient at as a consequence of instruction.</li> <li>❖ Make the task fair to all students; avoid bias.</li> <li>❖ Make the task such that student response can be reliably and accurately measured.</li> <li>❖ Make students aware in advance of the criteria upon which their work will be judged.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BINARY CHOICE ITEMS</b></p> <p>Binary choice questions can include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• True/false</li> <li>• Yes/no</li> <li>• Correct/incorrect</li> <li>• Fact/opinion</li> </ul> <p>Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Phrase items so that a superficial analysis by the student suggests a wrong answer.</li> <li>❖ Rarely use negative statements; never use double negatives</li> <li>❖ Include only one concept in each statement</li> <li>❖ Have an approximately equal number of items representing the two categories being tested.</li> <li>❖ Keep item length similar for both categories being tested.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MULTIPLE BINARY CHOICE</b></p> <p>How does it work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement- stem/stimulus is presented as the overlying base for the questions to follow.</li> <li>• Then response items follow.</li> <li>• True/false; yes/no; correct/incorrect; fact/opinion</li> </ul> <p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher level of Bloom's taxonomy (if you introduce new content in the stem)</li> <li>• Highly efficient for gathering student data</li> <li>• More reliable than other selected response items</li> <li>• More difficult for students and more efficient for teachers than multiple choice</li> </ul> <p>Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Separate item clusters</li> <li>❖ Each item meshes well</li> <li>❖ Similar length of questions</li> <li>❖ Questions stay on topic with the stem</li> <li>❖ Do not use negative statements</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MULTIPLE CHOICE ITEMS</b></p> <p>Parts of a multiple choice items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stem - The core of a multiple choice item, stated as a stand-alone question or statement</li> <li>• Item Alternatives - The choices offered as responses to the stem. It is recommended that 4 or 5 alternatives be given. Never less than 4, rarely more than 4.</li> <li>• Distractors - Incorrect alternatives. Each distractor should be plausible and should relate clearly to the stem.</li> </ul> <p>Guidelines for Writing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The stem should consist of a self-contained question or problem. The item should not rely on the alternatives in order to make sense. Instead, stems should lead to a correct response without the alternatives listed.</li> <li>2. Avoid negatively stated stems. We all dreaded the questions using the word "not".</li> <li>3. Do not allow the length of alternatives to supply unintended clues. Alternatives that were unusually lengthy or short in comparison to the other alternatives may cause students to focus on these alternatives as being correct when, in fact they may not be.</li> <li>4. Randomly assign correct answers to alternative positions. Alternatives A, B, C, and D should be listed as correct responses an equal number of times through out an assessment and randomly distributed.</li> <li>5. Never use "all-of-the-above" alternatives, but "none-of-the-above" alternatives may be used. An "all-of-the-above" alternative may be overlooked when students encounter a correct response in the first alternative. Additionally, if a student only knows that two of the alternatives are correct but is unsure about the third, s/he will know to select "all-of-the-above". "None-of-the-above" does not present these problems and it may offer an increased level of difficulty when desired.</li> </ol>