

Useful tips for creating single-choice answer MCQs

Rules for the stem

1. The stem is complete and can be answered without seeing the options
2. Stem is clear and specific
3. Include material in the stem that would be repeated in the options
4. Avoid negatives and state in the positive form

Rules for the answer

1. Only one correct answer is included
2. The position of the correct answer varies
3. Avoid a correct answer that includes the elements most common in other options

Rules for the options

1. Options do not overlap
2. Length of options is short, and approximately equal
3. Avoid absolutes such as never, always and all
4. Avoid vague frequency terms such as rarely, usually
5. Avoid AOTA and NOTA, or both A and B
6. Present options in logical order (chronological or numerical)
7. Grammar consistent in the stem and alternatives

Rules for the distractors

1. All distractors are plausible
2. Common student misunderstandings are incorporated as distractors