



Guidelines for Writing Test Questions

The provision of CE credit requires a mechanism that allows participants to assess their mastery of presented material. Therefore, each presentation requires a set of multiple-choice test questions. In general, the educational objectives and test questions should be representative of the full range of program content. Test questions should be multiple-choice, typically with four response options (A, B, C, D) for each question. A minimum of 5 test questions per presentation is recommended.

Content

1. Focus on a single issue, fact, or problem.
2. Test important material. Avoid trivial facts.
3. Use language appropriate for the audience. Use terminology common to dental practice.
4. Keep content of items independent from one another. Avoid interdependency that clues the test-taker to other items' answers.
5. Use good grammar, punctuation, spelling.

Stem: This is the introductory question or partial statement that the test-taker must answer or complete.

1. State the central idea clearly and concisely. Most of the text of the item should be in the stem and not in the response options.
2. Avoid overly specific knowledge, excess information, teaching in the stem.
3. Use positive statements in the stem. Avoid negative phrasing ("all of the following except," "which of the following is not") as much as possible.
4. Avoid the personal pronoun "you."

Response Options

1. Avoid "all of the above" and "none of the above."
2. Avoid simple "true-false" questions.
3. Avoid absolute terms such as "always," "never," "completely," and "absolutely."
4. Organize the responses in a logical or numerical order.
5. Make sure response options are independent and not overlapping.
6. State responses positively. Avoid negative words like "not" as much as possible.
7. Try to make all response options fairly consistent in length.
8. Make sure responses are homogenous in content and parallel in grammar.



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9. Make sure all responses are plausible. Avoid absurd or ridiculous options.
10. Make sure only one of the options is the correct answer. Clearly indicate which is the correct response.

References

- Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations. JCNDE Test Item Development Guide. January 2020. Contains additional details and examples of test questions. Available at:
https://jcnde.ada.org/~media/JCNDE/pdfs/test_item_dev_guide.pdf?la=en.
- Haladyna TM, Rodriguez MC. Developing and Validating Test Items. Part II: Developing Selected-Response Items. Chapter 6: Guidelines for Writing Selected-Response Items. New York and London: Routledge, 2013:89-110.