

QUICK REFERENCE SHEET – FORMAT GUIDELINES

MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Target Important Knowledge and Skills
- Use Clear, Concise, and Appropriate Language

Components of Multiple-Choice Items

Hints

DIRECTIONS

Brief, usually single sentences which instruct students how to respond after they have considered some relevant text or graphic.

Optional

TEXT OR GRAPHIC

Things such as reading passages, charts, cartoons, graphs, pictures, maps, photographs, and sketches.

STEM

A simple statement or question which presents a problem or task to the student.

Required

OPTIONS

Responses to the item stem from which students choose the correct or best answer.

- Use when item contains text or graphic.
- Write clearly and concisely.
- Place above the relevant text or graphic.
- Direct attention to the relevant text or graphic.
- Use **boldface type**.

- Select clear and concise language.
- Use easily-understood text or graphic.
- Use age-appropriate readability and subject matter.
- Consider sensitivity issues and cultural bias.
- Consider if graphic can be reproduced.

- State in questioning or declarative form in third-person format.
- Use simple, basic vocabulary
- Use positive stems.
- Use **boldface** type for negative words and words to be analyzed.
- Avoid providing clues to the correct answer.

- Provide four options always.
- Focus on “one absolutely correct answer” or “the best or most appropriate answer.”
- Label, using CAPITAL letters, “A,B,C,D.”
- Do not include any “none of the above” or “all of the above,” or “A and B only” responses.
- List numerals in ascending order, except when this placement may give a clue to the correct answer.
- List dates in chronological order, except when this placement may give a clue to the correct answer.
- Use no obviously inappropriate options (plausible)
- State options with uniform length, and grammatical structure (parallel).
- Avoid absolute qualifiers (i.e., “never” and “always”).
- Avoid mutually exclusive opposites

★ Multiple-choice items **always** have a stem and options.