How To Write Effective Test Questions

Testing plays a pivotal role in a student's learning process. It not only helps teachers collect feedback and assess student comprehension on subject matter, but it can also motivate learners to focus and put effort toward their studies. Download and use this free checklist to help you master the art of test making.



Prep Work

- [ ] Define the objective(s) of the test.
- [ ] Determine the time limit and length of the test.
- [ ] Choose a test format.

  Tests can utilize one type of question or a combination of multiple formats.

  - [ ] Multiple choice
  - [ ] Fill in the blank
  - [ ] True or False
  - [ ] Open ended/short answer
- [ ] Write questions in a direct question format, rather than an incomplete statement.

Multiple Choice

- [ ] Ensure answer options are similar in format and structure and that no answer choice stands out in length.
- [ ] Provide 3-5 choices for each question.
- [ ] Keep all of the above' and 'none of the above' answers to a minimum.

- [ ] Ensure answer options (A, B, C, D) are distributed randomly and do not follow a pattern.
- [ ] Include a variety of questions that test knowledge, application, comprehension, analysis and evaluation.

True or False

- [ ] Make sure the statement is either 100% true or false so there is no debate on the correct answer.
- [ ] Avoid words such as “always” or “never” as they can often be used to trick students. Be sure to focus on only one idea or piece of information per question.
- [ ] Randomize the distribution of the questions so there is no apparent pattern in the answers.

Fill in the Blank

- [ ] Write instructions for each section.
- [ ] Add two or fewer blanks to a question.
- [ ] Format questions so the blanks are close to the end of the statement.
- [ ] Be sure that there is only one clear correct answer to the question.
- [ ] Be sure each blank only requires a one or two-word answer.

Open Ended/Short Answer

- [ ] Hone in on a specific detail, rather than asking for general information or thoughts.
- [ ] If the prompt is longer, include one main topic with several follow-up questions or points within the prompt so students have guidance on how to expand on the topic.
- [ ] Include comprehension questions that start with "Explain the following..."

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