

Using Multiple Choice Format Testing
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Some Advantages:

- ***Multiple Choice Testing is considered to be a better test of knowledge than simple "true/false" testing since students may get points for knowing an answer is incorrect without knowing the correct answer.***
- ***It provides more choice options and less chance to guess***
- ***It can evaluate many types of knowledge for example: procedures, methods, terminology and interpretation.***
- ***Multiple Choice Testing can provide for computer assisted marking.***
- ***An evaluation of student understanding can be gleaned from the statistical results of the test, allowing the teacher to structure future teaching.***

Some Disadvantages:

- ***Multiple Choice Testing does not allow a student to express or explain an answer.***
- ***Multiple Choice Testing does not allow a student to rationalize or justify a theory.***
- ***If the distracters are not believable the testing becomes too easy and not a good means of evaluation.***
- ***Multiple Choice Testing can run the risk of being too easy as it tends to lean towards testing of simple recall and fact.***

Some Tips for Formulating Good Multiple Choice Questions:

- ***Don't set out to confuse or trick your students when using Multiple Choice Testing. Remember you are using this as an evaluation tool, not a means of confusion.***
- ***Make sure that you are clear and concise in the development of your stem or base statement. Many feel that you should not use negatives when writing the stem statement since it does lead to confusion sometimes. Even if they know the correct answer there can be the possibility of misreading the statement if it is not clear. It is also recommended that the bulk of the wording should be used in the stem. But again... keep it clear!***
- ***Following in line with being clear and concise, most teachers feel that it is more appropriate to have only one correct answer and at least three distracters giving the student four choices.***
- ***Make sure that the correct answer is the same length as the distracters. Many times we tend to add more information and length to the appropriate choice.***

- ***Most teachers agree that there should be a consistent number of distracters, again, avoiding confusion and questioning if something is missing.***
- ***Avoid using "All of the above" and "None of the above" since we tend to use these distracters only when they are the correct answer. You also need to be able to completely verify their correctness. If you are going to use these distracters, they should be used as an option on every question. But again, most agree that they shouldn't be used.***
- ***It is recommended that the choices are kept as short and to the point as possible.***
- ***Vary the order of choice of the correct answer, trying to make sure that there are approximately equal numbers of correct options. Students can be quick to recognize any type of pattern, and we seem to be prone towards pattern development.***
- ***Make sure all answers are believable and clearly either correct or incorrect.***
- ***It is considered best to make all choices similar in phrasing and grammar. Any variance in style or wording can give an unnecessary clue to the correct answer or the answers that are incorrect.***
- ***Be careful not to give away correct answers in other questions throughout the test. Often times in organizing ourselves we create questions later on in the test that reveal answers to questions prior.***
- ***Once the test is written, proof read it carefully and analyze its value as an evaluation tool. Anticipate the problems and pitfalls that your students might have. Appraise your wording carefully.***
- ***Finally, once the test is finished and you are happy with it as an evaluation tool, make sure you look over it one more time, taking into consideration the learning outcomes of the course that you are teaching. If the test is a fair and reasonable evaluation of those outcomes, you are using this method appropriately!***

***Remember that almost always...
SIMPLICITY IS BETTER!***

Question: When using multiple choice questions as an evaluation tool, one should always...

- a) make sure the stem or base statement is clear, concise and to the point.***
- b) make sure the distracters are always plausible but incorrect.***
- c) make sure the wording is not confusing and ambiguous.***
- d) make sure the above statements are all practiced.***

Some Advantages:

- *Essay Format is an effective way to evaluate most types of knowledge.*
- *It is a more detailed way of evaluating learning outcomes involving explanation and organization.*
- *Thought process can be better understood and evaluated.*
- *Understanding can be appraised in whole or in part.*
- *Spelling, grammar and writing capability can be analyzed and evaluated.*
- *Students are able to practice their writing skills.*
- *A detailed understanding can be gained as to how effective your teaching has been.*

Some Disadvantages:

- *Essay questions must be formatted extremely well in order that the students understand what is required and what is to be written.*
- *Students tend to ramble and discuss much more than is required if they are not sure of the requirements.*
- *Marking can be extremely tedious especially if the quality of the answer is bad.*
- *Spelling and grammar can be terrible these days.*
- *Writing quality can be difficult to read and in some cases impossible to decipher.*
- *Students tend sometimes to over simplify because of their poor writing skills.*
- *Other types of evaluations are able to cover more course content than a simple series of essay questions*
- *Essay Format in general takes a long time to mark when students want their marks back yesterday!*

Some Tips for Formulating Good Essay Questions:

- *To begin developing an essay question for an examination, you need to first consider the objective or purpose of the question. Once you focus on the objective then the question can be structured in a way that the student can be effectively evaluated.*
- *The answer that you get is usually the product of the question you ask. If you are not clear and concise, the answer will usually be loose and unstructured. Therefore you need to be very careful, concise and structured in the development of your*

question, making sure the student knows exactly what you require.

- *Most teachers again feel that short simple and concise questions yield the best answers.*
- *Remember again... we are not here to confuse them; we are here to evaluate their learning.*
- *Ambiguity will confuse the student causing them to ramble and produce information that is not required. Many times a student will know and understand the knowledge but doesn't understand what the question requires.*
- *Outline the marking structure clearly so that the student understands the value of the question. If you don't, you may get more or less than what you require and the student may not demonstrate their command of the knowledge.*
- *Some teachers recommend that a time allotment be included on each essay question on an exam in order that the student has a realistic sense of time to be spent on the question.*
- *Be prepared to spend a substantial amount of time when marking. Mark a few and then walk away. Return and mark a few more. A run of discouraging answers can skew your thought process.*
- *Use an effective rubric that has been developed with your learning outcomes in mind. You need to outline carefully what the marks are for in order that the student can see what is required of them. There are many ways to say the same thing and they will try to capitalize on that when seeking more marks.*
- *Be ready to deal with all types of handwriting, spelling and grammar. Comprehension has become a greater issue with the onset of technology and the global classroom.*
- *Some teachers feel that you should not look at student names when marking essay question answers. The names can sometimes skew the marking. Many feel that student numbers on this type of exam are the best identification.*
- *Be ready for students to be stressed about this type of evaluation. Many times they will panic as they are unsure of their writing capabilities and essay questions are used less and less as an evaluation tool.*

REMEMBER... SIMPLE, CLEAR, AND CONCISE IS ALWAYS BETTER IN THIS CASE AS WELL!