

Checklist For Writing Multiple-Choice Questions

CREATE A CLINICAL VIGNETTE

- Focus on a single, clearly defined topic
- Include information that creates a realistic clinical picture
- Exclude irrelevant information that may mislead the examinee
- Avoid unfamiliar abbreviations, acronyms, and jargon

WRITE THE LEAD-IN QUESTION

- Create a clearly worded question that is focused on one specific point
- Include superlatives such as *most* or *best* to lead to only one correct answer
- Include the phrase “of the following” to clearly and specifically relate the lead-in question to the options
- Avoid absolutes such as *never* and *always*
- Avoid indefinite words such as *frequently* and *often*
- Avoid negative and true/false phrasing

CREATE THE OPTIONS

- One clearly correct answer
- Plausible but clearly incorrect distractors
- Homogeneous (e.g., all laboratory studies, diseases, or procedures)
- Grammatically parallel and following the lead-in question
- Similar length and complexity
- Mutually exclusive (e.g., not overlapping)

AVOID TEST-WISE CLUES

- Paired options
- Repeated words in the stem and key
- Key stands out as the longest, most detailed option
- Convergence (e.g., key has the most terms in common with distractors)
- Absolute terms in options
- Unequal intervals in numeric options