

Item-Writing Guidelines for Multiple-Choice Exams

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AAPSE Pesticide Certification Exam Development Workshop

Items

- 32 words or less (stem and options combined)
- Low reading level
- Proper grammar and spelling
- Consistent format (e.g., stem format, # of options)

Stems

- Question or sentence completion (one blank or colon at end of latter)
- No blanks at beginning or in middle of stem
- Contains all information necessary to determine the correct response
- Avoid negative terms (e.g., not, except, unless)
- Avoid relative statements/reliance on personal judgments

Options

- Each addresses single topic so as to avoid options that are half correct
- Avoid negative terms (e.g., not, except, unless)
- Avoid options that overlap or tip off the correct response
- Avoid All/None of the above and Either/Both

Distractors

- Logical and pertinent
- Similar to correct response in length and focus
- Grammatically consistent with stem
- Avoid absolutes (e.g., always, never, only)