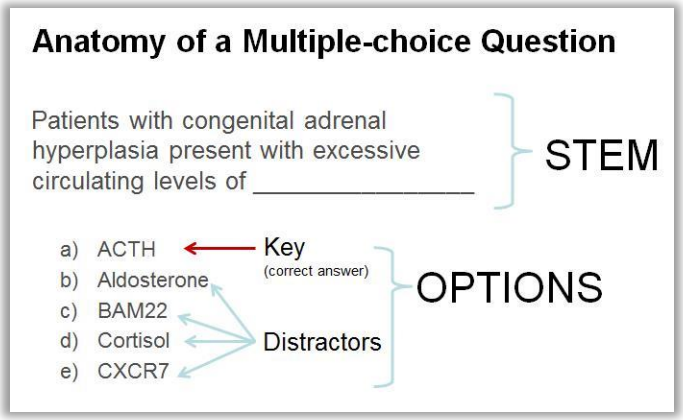
Writing Strong Multiple Choice Questions 2015/16

Instructors have been asked to submit a minimum of **five MCQ** questions, **each with annotated answers** (per hour taught), that best represent the core concepts per session(s). These questions will be used for weekly assessments (Fridays) and final block assessments (Assessment week). Questions that have been submitted may/may not be included on the final version of the weekly assessment (30-35 questions total) at the discretion of the Block Directors. Submitted questions may also be rewritten in an improved format and become property of the SoM.

CLARITY

To create clear and reliable weekly assessments, please try to keep multiple choice questions as straightforward as possible. Make the question stem concise and content rich so that the answer choices are clear. When guessing, students often pick the longest choice (and it is frequently correct).



The following criteria may be helpful as you design weekly assessment/quiz questions:

- Use positive stems only (no EXCEPT, NOT).
- Limit answer choices to A-D (including the correct answer). More or less will not be accepted.
- *All of the above, some of the above,* or *none of the above* answers cannot be included.
- No True or False questions (or Correct and Incorrect)
- One answer should be absolutely correct, 3 should be absolutely incorrect. (No "wrong" answers that are true statements).

CONTENT

Questions should test the **main concepts** covered in class or in lab, and are ideally tied to the objectives for your session. Recycled questions from previous years are acceptable if they meet the above criteria and are relevant to the current year's central session concepts.

- Overly detailed questions or testing on minor points do not enhance a quiz or test question's reliability.
- Questions can reference central points in **required** reading.
- Determine the main concept you want to test (ideally from your objectives) and then ask a direct question based on that concept.

EXAMPLE

"*Aplastic anemia signals which of the following?*"

A. Thrombin deficiency
B. Prothrombin deficiency
*C. Platelet deficiency**
D. A & C
E. None of the above

Poor question

A poor question that relies primarily on memorization can be rephrased into a better question that assesses the application of student knowledge not just the ability to memorize.

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"A 32 y/o woman is admitted to the ED with fatigue and generalized weakness. She reports excessive bleeding of the gums upon brushing teeth. A physical exam reveals small red dots over her trunk and bruising on her upper arms. You order a CBC and expect to find a deficiency of which blood component?"

A. *Thrombin*
B. *Prothrombin*
C. *Platelets**
D. *Fibrinogen*

Better question

WRITING/FORMATTING TEST QUESTIONS

Below are a few tips to ensure your questions are clear right away, and won't need editing afterwards:

- Indicate correct answer by underlining or highlighting text. Keep Word formatting at a minimum.
- Write the questions in full sentences. If there is a patient/case, describe the case, and then ask a question.
- Be sure to include units of measurement, if applicable.
- Spell out all abbreviations/acronyms.
- Drug names are not capitalized unless brand name (i.e. Viagra, Flonase vs. acetaminophen, codeine).

For more resources on item writing please review the NBME web-based item writing instructional video: http://download.usmle.org/IWTutorial/intro.htm and Constructing Written Test Questions for the Basic and Clinical Sciences: http://www.nbme.org/PDF/ItemWriting_2003/2003IWGwhole.pdf