

Guidelines for Writing Multiple Choice Questions

Multiple choice questions should be “single best answer” (also known as “A-type”), that help the reader to test their knowledge.

The questions may address issues of etiology, clinical presentation, differential diagnosis, diagnostic testing, natural history of disease, risk factors, management/treatment, potential complications, patient disposition, or other subjects pertinent to pre-hospital and hospital-based emergency medicine healthcare providers. For each question, you should indicate a single correct answer and provide a brief discussion of the correct answer (less than 100 words).

Elements of a multiple-choice question

- *Stem* - presents the clinical problem and question
- *Options* - provide one correct answer and four distractors (incorrect answer options). Options should be labeled A-E, and the correct answer could be any of the five letter options.
- *Rationale* – explains why the correct answer is correct, and why incorrect answers are incorrect

A Closer look

- *Stem*
 - Construct questions that present a **clear problem** and elicit a **positive response**, such as “What is the most appropriate initial treatment?” Ensure that questions end in a question mark, to clarify what you are asking.
 - Do not construct questions around **exceptions** and **least likely diagnoses**. For example, avoid: “You would expect all of the following to be elevated in the plasma of this 72-year-old female patient *except...*” Avoid negative constructions, such as “Which of the following statements is *incorrect*?”
- *Options and distractors*
 - Provide only one correct answer and a brief discussion of the correct answer (less than 100 words).
 - Distractors should be plausible and realistic, but the correct answer should be the best choice for the clinical problem presented.
 - The correct answer and the distractors should be similar in length and phrasing: the correct answer should not stand out from incorrect answers.
 - **Do not include multiple answer options such as “All of the above” or “C and D.” Do not use “None of the above.”**
- *Rationale*
 - Providing a rationale enables questions to be used as a learning tool. Please explain why the distractors are incorrect, as well as why the correct option is correct. Explanations should be thorough, but no longer than 100 words.