

Objective Tests

1. Limitations:

- Cannot test ability in written expression or in developing concepts.
- May encourage guessing.
- Tendency to test only factual recall or simple understanding.
- Difficult to construct.

2. Strengths:

- Can deal with a wide range of problems or content quickly.
- Can be graded accurately and quickly.
- Can be tried out in advance and modified.
- Some objective tests can be used to test higher order thinking processes.

Types of Objective Tests

A. Multiple choice

Can be used for testing higher order cognitive functioning depending on the nature of the "stem" and the choices. The stem presents a statement, question or problem. The alternative choices include the right answer and several distracters. The distractors should attract students who have not studied the material--but not confuse those who have.

Rules for developing items:

State stems as briefly and concisely as possible.

Include only one central problem; or one incomplete statement; or one direct question in the stem.

State the material in the stem positively.

Avoid giving clues in the stem (e.g. "a" or "an")

Include as much material as possible in the stem so that students need not read the same material repeatedly in each choice.

Ensure that the statements proceed grammatically from the stem to the end of the each choice.

Develop 4-5 responses for each stem.

Highlight words like NOT or ALL EXCEPT so they won't be missed.

Scatter the correct responses randomly throughout the test.

Some suggest that items that are verbatim from the text should be avoided.

Set up responses one below the other rather than in paragraph form.

Avoid questions which can be answered on the basis of general knowledge rather than from knowledge of course material.

Use clear directions. (e.g. "Below are a number of items, each followed by 4-5 alternatives, only one of which is correct.

Indicate your selection of the correct alternative by. . .")

In serious testing (e.g. for comprehensive examinations) avoid using alternatives for humor only.

Alternatives for each stem should be approximately equal in length.

The following are poor multiple choice questions. Identify the reasons why and revise them.

- A. Moses in his later years was a
 - 1. leader of the children of Israel
 - 2. overseer of the two remaining tribes of Judah.
 - 3. architect of the new temple.
 - 4. instigator of several reforms in Amalekite religious policy.
- B. The reality of conflict suggests
 - 1. that leaders in the church are not communicating adequately.
 - 2. that leaders in the church are not developing people for ministry adequately.

Multiple choice questions can be used to stimulate critical thinking or problem solving. For example, you could ask students to design 4 alternatives for the following stem.

If Elijah had lived and prophesied during the time of Josiah, how might his responses to the religious climate of the day have been different?

Some possible responses:

- 1. He...
- 2. He...

3. He...

4. He...

Multiple choice can be used in application of knowledge. For example:

If the apostle Paul was alive today how might he respond to the issue of the violation of human rights under the _____ regime? Select the most likely response from the following: (suggest 3-5 options)

Mr. and Mrs. Jones teach a group comprised of older adults. They want to create a climate for discussion--but still be able to "take the floor" when they have to. Which of the following room arrangements would best accomplish their purposes?

YOUR TURN: Write one multiple choice item for a course you will be teaching this term. Ask a colleague to critique your item.

B. Matching Items

Matching tests require the student to pair statements or words in two columns of related material. The most common matching test consists of a list of statements in the first column and a list of responses in the second column. Students can number the right response or draw lines from the statement to the correct response. Matching exercises are most often used for recall or recognition of information.

Rules for developing matching tests:

Directions should be clear. (e.g. "Below are two columns. Column I describes. . . Column II lists. . . Match each description in column I with the correct item in Column II by. . .")

The exercises should consist of homogeneous materials (e.g. historical events and major person)

The entire matching exercise should be on the same page.

Column II should contain only one correct match for each statement in column I.

The responses in column II should be listed in some systematic fashion (e.g. alphabetically or chronologically) Then students who know the correct answers can find them without delay.

The statements in column I should be longer than those in column II because the statements should serve as stems and the responses as alternatives. See above for the rules for developing stems and alternatives.

Prepare lists of more than 5 items but less than 10-12 items.

Some instructors provide more responses that are necessary.

YOUR TURN: Design one matching exercise for a course you will be teaching this term. Ask a colleague to critique the exercise.

C. True/False Items

This type of test is criticized because it encourages guessing. They are also difficult to construct because there can be many qualifications (students will find every qualification possible). These tests are most often used for recall or recognition of information.

Rules for developing true/false exercises:

Statements should be completely true or completely false.

Avoid trivial statements.

Include only one idea in each item.

The test item should be false because it contains an important concept that is incorrect--not because it contains an insignificant error.

Avoid building in patterning clues (e.g. TFFFTFF) or lengthening the true responses.

Avoid words like "all", "always", "never", "every", "none", "only". Students learn that these are usually false statements.

Avoid indefinite terms like "several", "seldom", "frequently".

Avoid the use of negatives--especially double negatives. They take longer to answer and lead to more unintentional errors because they involve a reversal of the thinking processes. Write each item as an affirmative rather than as a negative statement.

Write clear directions. (e.g. "Below are a number of statements. Some are true and some are false. If the statement is true, circle the "T" on your answer sheet. If the statement is false. . .")

Use 40-50 items in a quiz. . .100 items in a regular examination. Fewer items reduces the reliability of the test.

The test should consist of approximately equal numbers of true and false items.

YOUR TURN: Develop a true/false item for a course you will be teaching this term. Ask a colleague to critique your work.