

Item Writing Guidelines

CONTENT	Be clearly aligned to the identified indicator
	Do not reference material or information presented in another item
	Focus on one idea or concept
	Test meaningful content (ask questions worth asking)
STYLE	Spell out acronyms
	Avoid the use of “NOT” and “EXCEPT”
	Avoid absolutes (e.g., always, never) and vague modifiers (e.g., best, worst)
	Use appropriate vocabulary
	Ensure correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling
	Use active voice and present tense
ITEM STEMS	State clearly and concisely
	Use complete sentences with ending punctuation in context
	Question appears at the end of the stem
	Use <i>which</i> before a noun and <i>what</i> before a verb
	Do NOT use “Which of the following”
ITEM RESPONSES	Answer options should be grammatically consistent with the stem and parallel in form
	Mutually exclusive (independent)
	Phrase choices positively (avoid NOT)
	Do NOT use “All (or none) of the above”
	All answer options should be free of clues to the correct answer
	Ordered purposefully (by length, alphabetically, etc.)
	All options are plausible