

NEBRASKA SCIENCE STYLE GUIDE

All general guidelines in the universal design style guide are also applicable.

ANSWER OPTIONS

- When answer options are complete sentences, they should begin with a capital letter and end with appropriate punctuation.
- Answer options should be arranged in ascending order, as ordered in an accompanying graphic, alphabetical order, or by length (from shortest to longest or longest to shortest, but avoid funneling to key).
- All types of answer options are left-aligned (e.g., decimals, fractions, mixed numbers).

EMPHASIS WORDS

- Capitalize emphasis words such as: MOST, MOST LIKELY, AND, BEST, NOT, and OR

INSTRUCTIONS

- Boldface instructions for items with a graphic in the stem.
- Specify type of graphic in introductory statement, such as chart, drawing, graph, picture, table, etc.

Use the _____ below to answer the question.

WRITING NUMBERS

Use numerals for all numbers **except**:

- 1) at the beginning of a sentence.
Seven puppies were born last week.
- 2) in verbal text where the number is not used to solve the problem. (spell out *one* through *nine*)
The two organisms below are similar.

Note: Round or approximate numbers may combine numerals and words (units). In a list or in the answer choices, left align the units.

16 million people

3 billion dollars

- 3) in combination with another numeral.
four 32-cent stamps

Large Numbers

Use commas to separate into periods.

2,645 16,287,153

Use commas, when words are used to indicate large numbers.

Three million, two hundred thousand, five

Note: Avoid beginning a sentence with a number; if necessary, write out number.

Decimals

Show 0 in ones place for decimal numbers less than one.

0.56

Fractions and Mixed Numbers

Use horizontal bar, not diagonal.

(correct) $\frac{1}{2}$ (incorrect) $\frac{1}{2}$

Write mixed numbers without a space between the integer and the fraction.

$2\frac{1}{2}$

Hyphenate fractions that are spelled out.

two-thirds

Negative Numbers

Write sign and number such that they don't touch (*use en-dash for negative sign*).

- 6 - 4.6

Chemical equations, food chains i.e., graphical representations of linear nature are centered beneath the stem or are included within the stem at the appropriate place. If centered beneath the stem, there should be an extra space above and below the formula.

MEASUREMENT

Unit and measure should appear on same line of text. Abbreviations are **not** followed by periods unless the period completes a sentence in the item choice. In science, units are rarely abbreviated. (*Exception: the abbreviation for inch is followed by a period*).

132 ft The distance they traveled was 27 km.
17 cm
93 yd
12 in.

For clarity, write out the unit in text of stem the first time. Then, use the standard abbreviation thereafter and in accompanying graphics and answer options.

in text: 1 milliliter (mL) and in options/graphics: 1 mL

To denote different times of the day, use the style of "a.m." and "p.m."

For temperature, insert a space before the numeric value and the degrees symbol.

ALIGNMENT

All types of answer options are left-aligned (e.g., decimals, fractions, etc.).

Horizontal List of Numbers

In science, horizontal lists are centered. Insert a comma and three spaces between each number.

4, 7, 112

(Exception: When using 4-digit and larger numbers, exclude the comma that separates the numbers.)

For a list using 4-digit and larger numbers, include the comma and separate the numbers with a semi-colon.

1,247; 2,349; 4,601

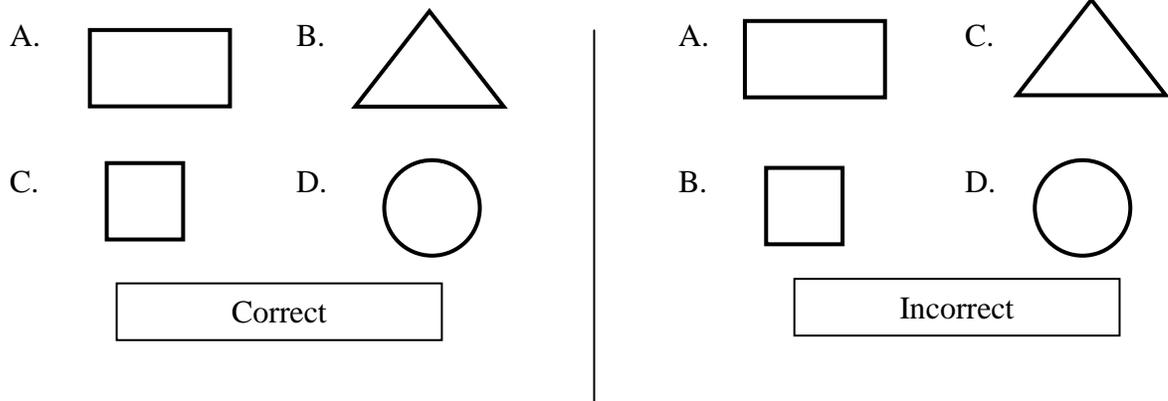
Bulleted Lists

Left align bulleted lists.

- First
- Second
- Third
- Fourth

FORMAT OF ANSWER CHOICES

When responses involve selecting an appropriate graphic, answer choices are arranged:



GRAPHICS

The following graphics need a title, in bold.

1. Bar graphs (horizontal and vertical)
2. Data charts
3. Circle graphs
4. Histograms
5. Line graphs
6. Scatter plots
7. Tables

Tables

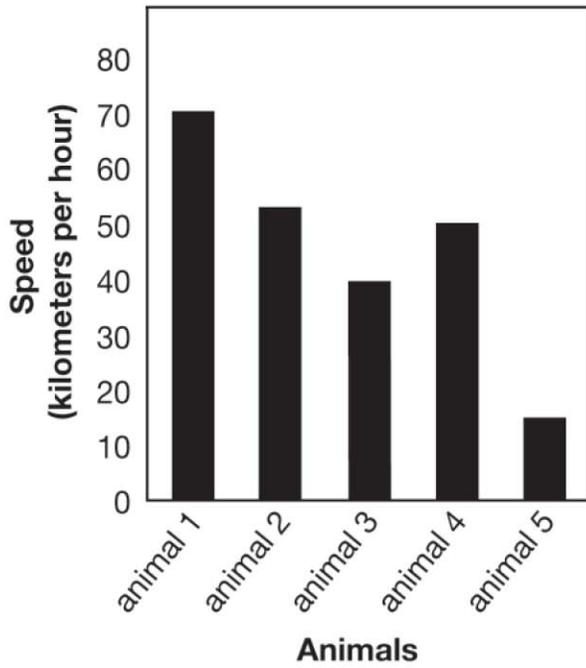
Title and headers are bold.

Text in tables is left justified.

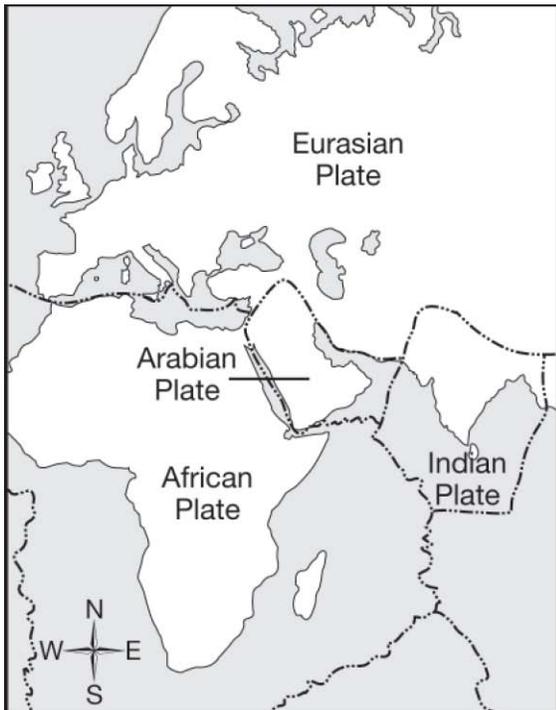
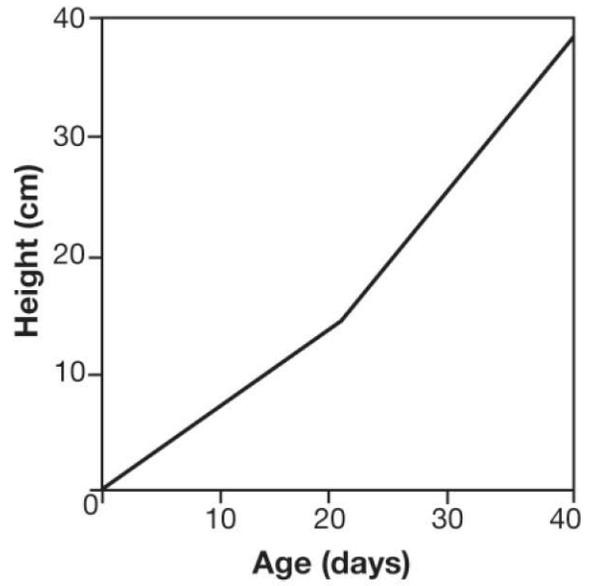
Numbers in tables are centered.

Science Examples

Animal Speeds



Corn Plant Growth



grass → insect → mouse

Example Graphic with Callouts

