

Constructing the stem:

- The stem should make a single statement or ask a single question that is of central importance to a learning objective.
- Use simple, clear language.
- Put as much wording in the stem as possible, rather than in the alternatives, to minimize reading.
- Use negatively worded items (except, least, never, not) only to measure a relevant learning objective, such as what to avoid, what is not true, or several characteristics of a trait. The negative word should appear in capital letters and boldface font.
- Limit the use of *always* and *never* because good test takers will rule out distractors based on these words.

Constructing alternatives:

- Use three to five alternatives.
- Alternatives should be unambiguous so the correct response can be clearly identified.
- Alternatives should fit the stem grammatically.
- Alternatives should be of equal length and grammatical complexity because there is a tendency to make the correct answer longer.
- Place alternatives in a logical or numerical order, such as placing numbers in ascending order, dates in chronological order, and names in alphabetical order.
- Make the distractors plausible (no giveaways that can be easily eliminated) and use common misconceptions of students to create distractors.
- Avoid *all of the above*.
- Sparingly use *none of the above*.