



## Multiple-Choice Item Best Practices

DO	DON'T
<p><b>Item Stems:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Use your own words; not textbook statements</li><li>✓ Use simple, straightforward language</li><li>✓ Use the second person (you) and use active verbs</li><li>✓ Write about authentic work-related problems</li><li>✓ Use standard, up-to-date technical language and terminology</li><li>✓ Spell out acronym unless test-takers are not taught full name</li><li>✓ Use generic names instead of proprietary</li><li>✓ Each item should stand alone</li></ul>	<p><b>Item Stems:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ Avoid long, complex sentences</li><li>✗ Avoid teaching or insert trivial statements</li><li>✗ Avoid negatives</li><li>✗ Avoid ambiguous or indefinite terms, make absolute statements or broad generalizations</li><li>✗ Avoid inserting extraneous material</li><li>✗ Avoid providing clues to the answer</li><li>✗ Avoid vague stems</li></ul>
<p><b>Response Options:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Plausible and homogeneous distractors</li><li>✓ State in positive terms</li><li>✓ Should be grammatically and substantively consistent</li><li>✓ Statements based on common student errors or misconceptions</li><li>✓ True statements that do not answer the question</li><li>✓ Should be all the same length or a combination of different lengths</li><li>✓ Correct choice should be distributed A, B, C, etc.</li><li>✓ Place alternatives in logical or numerical order (use all numerals or spell all of them out; list them in ascending numerical order)</li><li>✓ At least 3 response options</li></ul>	<p><b>Response Options:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ Avoid statements too close to the correct choice</li><li>✗ Avoid using off-the-wall, implausible response options</li><li>✗ Avoid using “all of the above” or “none of the above”</li><li>✗ Avoid overlapping responses (e.g., if A is true)</li></ul>