

Question (item) Writing Guidelines
For the American Osteopathic Board of Preventive Medicine for both
Certification and Recertification Examinations¹

1. All questions (items) should be multiple choice. These can be of two types: One-best-answer; and Matching
 - a. One-Best-Answer items involve a question or incomplete statement followed by five possible answers. We prefer 5 equally plausible answers, if possible. Only one of the answers is correct. These one-best –answer type of questions can, in turn, be of two types:
 - i. Single items or
 - ii. Cases.
 1. A SINGLE ITEM is independent of all other items. That is to say, it stands alone and the answer is dependent only the information contained in the question stem itself.
 2. A CASE is a group of one-best-answer items preceded by a header, or introduction, which sets up a scenario to be used in completing a group of items that follow the scenario.
 - a. Each item should be dependent on the case history;
 - b. Each item should NOT give away the answer to any other item
 - b. A Matching set includes a list of similar words or phrases (distractors) followed by numbered items (Case Scenarios) to be matched.
 - i. Matching sets can contain 5 answers
 - ii. The answers should be alphabetized
 - iii. You DO NOT have to have the same number of items as possible answers
 - iv. Each answer may be used once, more than once, or not at all.
2. We require the content of the questions to be:
 - a. Generally accepted as correct
 - b. Appropriate for Residency trained individuals
 - c. Verifiable with standard medical publications
 - d. Consistent with the current standard of care

3. General Guidelines

- a. The question stem must lead to one specific answer
- b. **DO NOT** test the concept of “which one is not like the others”. This means **DO NOT** use stems including the words **EXCEPT, LEAST, or NOT**
- c. Please avoid using the terms **ALWAYS, NEVER, FREQUENTLY, AND RARELY.**
- d. We do not accept items that use as possible answers: “All of the above”, “none of the above”, “A and B are both correct (or other combinations).
- e. Try not to teach in the stem of the question. **AVOID** the use of unnecessary information.
- f. If Osteopathic terminology is to be used, it should be referenced to the latest copy of the *Glossary of Osteopathic Terminology* prepared by the Educational Council on Osteopathic Principles of the AACOM.
- g. Include the correct answer
- h. **THE SOURCE OF THE CORRECT ANSWER MUST BE INCLUDED AT THE BOTTOM OF THE QUESTION.** Identify the source, author, page, and publisher. Information should be sufficient enough to enable one to locate the source and to verify the answer.

Examples

1) One-Best-Answer

The major environmental source of lead absorbed in the human blood stream in adults is:

- a. Air
- b. Food
- c. Lead-based paint
- d. Soil
- e. Water

Correct answer is a.
Source_____

The phrase “The major environmental source of lead absorbed in the human blood stream in adults is:” is called the stem of the question. The responses a,b,c,d,e are each called a distractor or an answer. There must be only one correct answer.

2) Case study

You are asked to do a prospective surveillance of nosocomial infections in a local hospital.

1. Based on national data, you expect the incidence of nosocomial infections to be
 - a. <1%
 - b. 1-2%
 - c. 3 – 5%
 - d. 6-8%
 - e. 9-10%

2. You expect the most common site of infection to be
 - a. Urinary Tract
 - b. Surgical wounds
 - c. Respiratory tract
 - d. Blood stream
 - e. Gastrointestinal Tract

Correct Answer 1c 2 a
Source(s) _____

Both the above questions refer to nosocomial infections in a hospital. The first question does not influence the second question. All questions have the correct answer shown

3) Matching

For each item listed below select one lettered option, that is most closely associated with it. Each lettered option may be selected once, more than once, or not all.

Please match the researcher for whom each theory is most likely to be associated.

1. The distribution of consumption model, which showed that minor variations in availability of alcohol has no effect on consumption.

2. A psychoanalytic theory that states that drug use might represent an attempt to cope with painful emotions.
 - a. De lint
 - b. Horton

- c. Khantzian
- d. Rado
- e. Smart

Correct answer 1a 2d

Source _____

The statements numbered 1 and 2 above are considered phrases against which the possible answers are to be matched. Options a through e are the answers (or distractors). Notice that there are more possible responses than questions. This is permissible.

¹ Adapted from the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners Item Writing Guide. 1999, National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners