

Writing Test Questions Well – Part 3 of 3  
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Very often an organization wants to prove the effectiveness of its training by administering some type of test at the end of the training. Unfortunately, most trainers are not skilled in writing test questions. It is much more than simply writing 20 questions about the content. You can skew the results of the test (and therefore get inaccurate feedback about the effectiveness of the training) if your test questions are not designed correctly.

In this third of three articles on designing appropriate test questions, we will discuss matching questions and how best to design them.

Matching questions are somewhat easier to create than multiple choice questions because they only require one right answer for the “B” column as opposed to the ‘various’ wrong answers needed for multiple choice questions.

Here are some guidelines for creating a matching test that should ensure you are able to accurately test the knowledge of your students.

Never provide more than 15 matching questions; if you DO want to provide more, then break them up into chunks of 15 (perhaps that all deal with the same concept). More than 15 really bogs down the process for the test taker. Pretty soon all the letters and numbers are just swimming in front of their eyes; you’ll find that they accidentally reuse the same letters or don’t use one at all. Fifteen is a manageable number of options.

Provide more “B” column answers than “A” column questions – but not a lot more. This makes the matching process a bit more difficult for the test taker. Do not provide more than three extra “B” column options or it becomes too confusing for the test taker.

Alternatively, there may be fewer options in the “B” column and more questions in the “A” column. In this case you would instruct the test-taker to use the “B” column responses as many times as appropriate.

Example: In column “A” identify what type of store layout each named store utilizes. You may use the answers in column “B” more than once.

A	B
____ Home Depot	Grid
____ CVS	Racetrack
____ JC Penney	Boutique
____ Sears	
____ Blockbuster	
____ Shop Rite / Publix	

As with multiple choice responses, you want to provide logical wrong answers in the B column. If you're going to create a one-of-a-kind question, be sure to provide a logical alternative, even if it doesn't fit any other possibility.

For instance,

A compass always points \_\_\_\_\_, should have the options of at least North and South in the "B" column. If only North is supplied, and there is only have one question in the "A" column that has to do with direction, the correct answer is obvious to the test taker.

Who knew creating test questions was such a science! By applying the principles you've just learned in this series of three articles you'll be able to create well structured end-of-training assessments that accurately test the knowledge of your trainees.