

## Guidelines for writing effective distractors for multiple-choice questions

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1. Write plausible distractors
  - Each of the incorrect response options should be plausible, at least on the surface. Selecting the correct response should require a clear (and ideally deep) understanding of the material.
2. Keep the length of the response options similar
  - The correct answer should not be the shortest or the longest response option.
3. Avoid overlapping response options
  - The response options should be mutually exclusive. It should not be the case that if one of the distractors is true, another distractor must be true as well.
4. Avoid grammatical and spelling errors
  - Carefully proof read your work and make the choices grammatically consistent with the stem.
5. Avoid using absolute terms such as “always,” “never,” “all,” or “none.”
  - Students recognize that few things are universally true so response options that include such terms are easily rejected.
6. Avoid the “all of the above” response option
  - Students only need to recognize two of the response options to get the answer correct.
7. Avoid the “none of the above” response option
  - This option does not test whether the student knows the correct answer, but only that he/she knows the distractors aren’t correct.