# HOW TO WRITE QUIZ QUESTIONS

Multiple choice examinations are a common testing method used to determine if a student has a basic understanding of the knowledge components of a particular topic. This is the type of test you will take when you sit for the Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination (MBLEx) to demonstrate you have the knowledge necessary to work safely and competently in the massage profession.

Multiple choice test questions are often referred to as "items." Items consist of a *stem* and a set of options with a *key* and *distractors*.

- The Stem: The stem is the beginning part of the item that presents the item as a problem to be solved, a question asked of the respondent, or an incomplete statement to be completed, as well as any other relevant information.
- The Key: The key is the correct answer.
- The Distractors: The distractors are incorrect answers.

#### WRITING THE STEM

Please follow these guidelines when writing the stem for your quiz questions:

- Use straightforward language: The stem should be written in straightforward language so that a
  prepared learner need only read it once to understand it. State the question or statement as
  briefly as possible and avoid awkward phrasing, unknown terms, wordiness, and unnecessary
  complexity.
- Use a positive form: The question should always be stated in a positive form. Avoid negatively phrased questions such as, "Which of these bony landmarks is <u>not</u> the insertion point of the extensor carpi radialis longus?" Negative phrasing often causes learners to misread questions and therefore miss a question they might otherwise have answered correctly.
- Avoid "you": Avoid the use of the word "you" when asking questions. The examinee could argue that although that is what "you" would do, this is what "I" would do and he or she would be correct. All answers must have a reliable reference so that the instructor can defend them in the event they are challenged.
- Avoid teaching in the stem: Avoid saying so much in the stem that it becomes a lesson for items that occur later in the test. For example, "A technique that stretches and separates the superficial muscle and fascia from the deep fascia and facilitates thixotropy (gel to sol process)" explains the word thixotropy.
- Avoid clues in the stem: If there are words in the stem that are also in the option, the examinee can respond on the basis of the clue alone. For example, if the stem asks, "Which of the following techniques describes skin rolling?" and the key states, "using the fingertips to roll the skin along the body" the question should be rewritten.

#### WRITING THE KEY

Write the key immediately after writing the stem and make sure it is the only correct answer. The key should always be listed first when you submit your quiz with the distractors following. Keys are shuffled with distractors each time a new person takes the quiz to support quiz security and to randomize key positions in each complete quiz.

#### WRITING THE DISTRACTORS

Each quiz question should have one key and three distractors. Distractors should match the key in length, phrasing, and style. If the key is two words long, the distractors should be two words long. Quizzes with made-up words, unknown terminology, distractors composed of minuscule distinctions between answers, the use of humor, and the distractors "all of the above," "none of the above," or "both A and B" cannot be used and will be returned to the presenter for revision.

## WHY WRITE QUIZZES

One useful study exercise is to write multiple-choice quiz questions from textbook reading material. This helps you think like an item writer, which helps you better approach multiple-choice examinations strategically in your classes. Try to write two quiz questions for every page you read. You'll comprehend the content on a deeper level and have a practice quiz to use in preparation for your actual classroom exam. Be sure to make a separate key so you remember the correct answers later. In the sample questions shared below the correct answer is identified with a \*.

## **SAMPLE QUIZ QUESTIONS**

- 1. The energy-consuming process of moving ions and molecules across the cell membrane is:
  - a. Osmosis
  - b. Passive transport
  - c. Ionic shift
  - d. Active transport\*
- 2. The excessive growth of scar tissue over a healed wound is a:
  - a. Contracture
  - b. Tumor
  - c. Keloid\*
  - d. Angioma
- 3. What is the name of the flat bony projection on the superior lateral aspect of the scapula?
  - a. Coracoid process
  - b. Acromion process\*
  - c. Scapulothoracic projection
  - d. Glenoid end cap