

Item Shells

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Haladyna and Shindoll (1989) describe an item shell as a “hollow” MC item that has a syntactic structure, but no content. The test writer can insert important concepts into the item shell to construct challenging MC items. The use of item shells can make writing MC items easier and assist the writer in constructing challenging items. The following item shells are adapted from Haladyna (1997 and 2004; see *Further Reading on Multiple-Choice Testing* for further details).

Which best defines X?

Which is the meaning of X?

Which is synonymous with X?

Which is like X?

Which is characteristic (or uncharacteristic) of X?

Which is a defining characteristic of X?

Which is an example of X?

Which statement best exemplifies the principle of X?

Which is the cause of (or reason for) X?

Which is the relationship between X and Y?

A is to B as C is to which of the following?

Which is an example of the principle of X?

If X occurs, which is most likely to be the result?

Which is most commonly the cause of X?

Which distinguishes X from Y?

Which is most (or least) important (or significant, effective, etc.)?

Which is best (or worst, or highest/lowest, biggest/smallest, etc.)?

Which is most(or least) X?

Which is a difference (or similarity) between X and Y?

Which of the following principles applies to evaluating X?

Which is the most important factor contributing to X?

Which is a major shortcoming of X?

Problem presented. Which procedure (or strategy) would be used to solve this problem?

Problem presented. Which is a possible solution?

Problem presented. Why is X the most effective (or efficient) solution?