

Module 3A: Writing Items for Quizzes and Tests

by Dr. Tim Brophy

Hello. This is Tim Brophy, and welcome back to Passport to Great Teaching Creative Assessment. This is module 3, Writing Items for Quizzes and Tests. Though there are five short presentations in this module, I just want to remind you that there is a PDF of each of these presentations in your Canvas website. So if you want to download those and print one out and have it ready as you watch these modules to take notes, feel free to do so.

The goals for this module are first to introduce to you the item types that we use for quizzes and tests. And then I'm going to introduce to you and you're going to apply steps for writing item stems and answer choices for selected response items. And then I'll also introduce to you and you will apply steps for writing short answer and extended response items. And then we'll also introduce and apply the concepts of item difficulty and cognitive complexity.

So here's just a very quick overview of item types. The first one is called selected response. We're very familiar with those. These ask a question, provide a set of response choices or answer choices, usually three or four, one of which is clearly the best or correct answer.

And short answer questions are those where they're just answered by a phrase or a few sentences. And this also includes what we call sentence completion questions where there's simply a word or two that students would need to write in to complete a sentence.

The other item types-- extended response items. First of all, students construct in this case, an extended response, to a question. This is a lengthy response, and essay questions are usually open-ended response format questions. Performance assessments, on the other hand, are where students are going to produce a product or demonstrate some kind of a process, solve a problem that involves a lot of steps, or carry out some kind of activity that demonstrates to us their proficiency with a specific complex skill or body or group or a set of knowledge and skills.

So there are two basic types of performances. One is the on-demand performance, often used in the arts particularly. These are obtained at the time of an assessment. This might be an improvisation in music or a sight singing exercise, or it could be an opportunity in a non-arts class where a faculty member or two asks a student to stand up and extemporaneously speak about something. That could be an on-demand performance.

Whereas a performance event is one where students have had a chance to rehearse their performance. It's developed over time. And this is more of the presentation of a PowerPoint or a paper or something like that that they have actually had time to practice and rehearse.

So let's think for just a minute. Of these item types that I've just presented to you, what types do you use with your students? Do they fall into one main primary category? And if so, why? Thank you, and I'll see you in module 3b.

