Selected-Response
Items: Alternative
Choice
Alternative Choice Items

• Second in popularity to multiple-choice format
• Do not always need to be phrased in terms of true or false
• Sometimes referred to as binary-choice items, two-option items, or alternate-choice items where the student must pick from two opposite options (e.g., organic – inorganic; opinion – fact; metaphor – simile)
• However, the most common format is true-false
Format of Alternative Choice Items

• Multiple true-false item= Supplies a single question, paragraph, or statement and multiple items, each for which the student must indicate whether the statement is true or false (or select from two options)

• True-false items with correction= If the statement is false, the student is provided a space in which they must correct part of the statement to make it true (this part is usually indicated with an underline)
Guidelines for Developing Alternative Choice Items

• Avoid including more than one idea in the statement
• Avoid specific determiners and qualifiers that might serve as cues to the answer
  • Such as never, always, none, all, usually, sometimes, and frequently
• Ensure that true and false statements are of approximately the same length
• Avoid negative statements
Guidelines for Developing True-False Items

• Avoid long and/or complex statements
• Include an approximately equal number of true and false statements
  • Some students may automatically mark true or false when they are unsure of the answer, depending on the response set of the student. Having an equal number of true and false statements minimizes this
• Avoid including the exact wording from the textbook
• Format the items such that the response options are consistently placed (e.g., left side or right side)
Strengths and Weaknesses of Alternative-Choice Items

• Strengths
  • Can be scored in an objective manner, does not need much expertise to score
  • Efficient to develop and for responses

• Weaknesses
  • Not particularly useful except with the simplest learning objectives or for screening for early understanding
  • Very vulnerable to guessing (50% chance of the correct answer being obtained on the basis of guessing)
  • Vulnerable to effects of response sets (e.g., marking “t” for all items yields higher than 50% passing, because items are more likely to be true than false)
  • Responses that are wrong provide little diagnostic information
  • Produce a negative suggestion effect (may promote learning false information)
  • Appear easy to write, but are really not (e.g., it is difficult to write good “false” statements)