

Item Writing Guidelines for Selected Response

(W. James Popham *Test Better Teach Better* 2003)

Binary Choice Items

- **Generate binary choice items in pairs, not singly**
- **Phrase each item so that a cursory reading leads to an incorrect answer.**
- **Avoid negative statements, and never use double negatives.**
- **Restrict single-item statements to single concepts.**
- **Use an approximately equal number of items, reflecting the two categories tested.**
- **Make statements representing both binary categories equal in length.**

Matching Items

- **Use fairly brief lists, placing the shorter entries on the right.**
- **Employ homogeneous lists.**
- **Include more responses than premises.**
- **List responses in a logical order.**
- **Describe the basis for matching and the number of times a response can be used.**
- **Try to place all premises and responses for any matching item on a single page.**

Multiple Choice Items

- **The question or problem in the stem must be self contained.**
- **Avoid negatively stated stems.**
- **Each alternative must be grammatically consistent with the item's stems.**
- **Make all alternatives plausible, but be sure that one of them is indisputably the best or correct answer.**
- **Randomly use all answer positions in approximately equal numbers.**
- **Never use "all of the above" as an answer choice, but use "none of the above" to make items more demanding.**