# Assessing Analytic and Evaluative Skills Using Multiple Choice

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Jennifer Szende

# Why use Multiple Choice in philosophy?

## Effectiveness: MC testing can be an effective way of testing the learner’s ability to recall, understand, apply, analyze, and evaluate. (See, e.g. DiBattista 2008, 2011; Loftis 2019)

## Fairness: Subjectivity of assessment is located at the stage of writing questions, rather than at the stage of marking questions. Subjectivity is more fairly distributed across all test takers (Loftis 2019)

## Efficiency: Large scope of material in a relatively small/short test; easy to mark, even for large and online courses. Cognitive load of marking is reduced. Possibility of immediate feedback to learners. (DiBattista 2008, 2011)

# Why do philosophers avoid multiple choice?

## It’s too difficult for the instructor! Constructed answer questions are easier to produce (DiBattista and Kurzawa 2011).

* Practice writing questions in a variety of styles, for a range of skills.
* Pace yourself throughout the term.

## MC is too easy/too low on Bloom’s taxonomy (DiBattista and Kurzawa 2011; Loftis 2019)

* \*What is the purpose of the test?
* MC can be formative, medium to high on Bloom’s taxonomy, and can provide a valid measure of student achievement.
* Skills to test with MC: Recall; Understanding; Apply; Analyze; Evaluate? (Loftis)

## Academic dishonesty. (McGee)

* \*What is the purpose of the test? (Appropriate assessment strategies for the thing being tested).
* Use low stakes multiple choice testing.
* Use randomization.
* Consider using untimed test and/or open book tests. Design a test that will require looking up (some? Most?) answers, and give students time and permission to do so.

General best practices for Multiple Choice:

* <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/assignment-design/designing-multiple-choice-questions>
* Brame, C. (2013) Writing good multiple choice test questions. Retrieved [July 13, 2021] from <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/writing-good-multiple-choice-test-questions/>

Diagram

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Some MC question writing strategies:

1. Paraphrase:
   1. Paraphrase the thesis.
   2. Paraphrase key definitions.
   3. Paraphrase key objections.
2. Consider key terms and key concepts.
3. Use comparisons/contrasts/lists drawn from course material.
4. What does the example show?
   1. Example from the reading: What point is Author making when they use X?
   2. Example from the news/ film/ popular culture: What would Author say about X?
   3. Example from the news/film/popular culture: Which Author would make which of the following claims?
5. Who would agree with [paraphrase]?
6. How might Author A respond to Author B’s question/quote/example/concern?
7. Author A and Author B agree about X.
   1. True or False?
   2. Which reason would each give for X?