A Quick Checklist for Item Writing Flaws

1. All options should be on the same continuum (e.g. all diagnosis)

2. Each MCQ should have a clear and focused question

3. Each MCQ should have the problem in the stem of the question, not in the options.

4. The options should not be a series of true/false statements

5. Ensure that questions have one, and only one, <u>best answer</u>.

6. There should be no gratuitous or unnecessary information in the stem or the options. If a vignette is provided with the MCQ, it should be required to answer the question

7. The item should not be a complex one, or K-type MCQs like both A. and B. OR B. and C. are correct

8. Questions and all options should be written in clear, unambiguous and *simple* language[1]

9. All distracters should be plausible

10. There should be no repeated words in the stem and the correct option

11. Avoid providing logical cues in the stem and the correct option that can help the examinees to identify the correct option without knowing the material

12. All options should be similar in length and amount of detail. Answer should not be the longest option

13. MCQ options should be arranged from the shortest to longest or in the numerical order

14. Avoid the use of absolute terms (e.g., never, always, only, all)

15. Avoid the use of vague terms (e.g., frequently, occasionally, rarely, usually, commonly)

16. Do not use negatively phrased questions (e.g., not, except, incorrect, least) in the lead-in

17. Do not use "all of the above" or "none of the above" as the last option

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[1] Simple language is without jargon, colloquialisms or local / regional specific expressions or use of words