Multiple Choice Questions

Guidelines for Writing Effective Multiple-choice Items

Write a stem as a clearly described question.
• Aim for the lowest possible reading level.
• Use simple, clear language with no subjective (such as,"best") or controversial concepts.
• State the stem, where ever possible, in positive form. If you must use negative wording, emphasize it by underlining or capitalizing the negative words).
• Avoid providing clues within the relevant answer.
• If you find yourself repeating the same words at the beginning of each response option, reword the stem to move the repetitive material into the question.
• Word response options as briefly as possible and be sure they are grammatically parallel.
• Develop distracters that are plausible and attractive to the learner who has not achieved the objective.
• Be sure there is only one correct or best answer.
• Avoid using "all of the above", 'none of the above', or other special distracters.
• Use each alternative as the correct answer about the same number of times.
• Design each item so that it is independent of other items on the test and contains no clues to other items.