

At a Glance: American Board of Radiology Item Format

This is intended for use as a quick reference when writing items for an American Board of Radiology (ABR) written exam. It briefly demonstrates acceptable and unacceptable ABR format. This document is supplemental and **not** a replacement for the Item Writers' Guide.

ABR Format

YES!

- ✓ Multiple-choice question (MCQ) with single best answer
- ✓ R-type (extended matching)
- ✓ Multiple-correct-options
- ✓ Drag-and-drop (point-and-click)
- ✓ Fill-in-the-blank

General

Use:

- ✓ clear and concise language; spell out acronyms.
- ✓ up-to-date information.
- ✓ focused stems and balanced options.
- ✓ clinically relevant and pertinent topics.

Stems

- ✓ Chronological and complete sentences (direct question)
- ✓ Positively worded
- ✓ Test a single knowledge concept
- ✓ All necessary information to determine correct answer without seeing options (i.e., pass "cover test")

Options

- ✓ MCQ = 4 or 5 total options, 3 can be acceptable (e.g., no change—increase—decrease)
- ✓ R-type = 7 to 10 options
- ✓ Multiple-correct-options = correct options × 2 (minimum)

Options should be:

- ✓ plausible, but *apparent* to a prepared candidate.
- ✓ similar in format—same category (i.e., treatment, symptom, diagnosis), part of speech, verb tense, structure, etc.
- ✓ two sets of pairs or all unique options.
- ✓ similar in length and should properly answer the stem.

NOT ABR Format

NO!

- ∅ True/False questions
- ∅ "Which of the following is true?"
- ∅ Incomplete statements ending in a colon

General

Do not use:

- ∅ excessive verbiage or details.
- ∅ overly advanced vocabulary.
- ∅ controversial or trendy subject matter.
- ∅ practices related to specific institutions or regions.

Stems

- ∅ Randomly arranged or irrelevant information
- ∅ Negatively worded question (e.g., items using NOT, EXCEPT, and FALSE)
- ∅ Test multiple knowledge concepts

Options

Options should not include:

- ∅ "All of the above"/"None of the above"
- ∅ "Yes"/"No" or "True"/"False"
- ∅ Multiple-type answers (e.g., "Both A and C" or "A, D, and E")

Options should not be:

- ∅ invented words or phrases.
- ∅ dissimilar in format—category (all diagnoses, opposed to diagnoses and symptoms), parts of speech (*observe vs observation*), verb tense (*testing vs test*), structure, etc.
- ∅ single pairs or groupings.
- ∅ dissimilar in length or unable to complete the stem.

The ABR Cover Test



- Can the question be answered without seeing the options?
- Does the item test a single knowledge component?
- Does the item ask a direct question?