RSNA SAM  
Brief Guide to Writing Good Questions 

**BEFORE YOU START**: Aim to test key concepts and vital information of your presentation. Provide at least **THREE** questions containing the most important key teaching points from your lecture. All questions must include a reference. You may submit only **ONE** True/False question. Image based questions are preferred.

**Definitions:**

- **Stem**: the “question” part of the item
- **Multiple Choice Distractors**: the incorrect choices
- **Key**: the correct answer

**The Stem:**

Should be “focused”: that is, contain the *main idea* of the question. (Use the “cover test”: can you cover the options and still answer the question?)

**Do not use negative constructions such as:**

A. “What finding is **NOT** associated with...”
B. “...all of the following **EXCEPT**...”
C. “Which of the following is **LEAST** likely...”

**Negative constructions will be discarded as submitted SAM questions**

Do use simple wording and sentence structure. No jargon or unusual abbreviations. Include no unnecessary information, and no “red herrings” that might be misleading.

**The Key (correct answer):**

- **MUST** be 100%, no doubt, accepted as correct
- Avoid nebulous, relative terms, like “frequently”, “rarely”, or “often”.
- Randomize the position of the correct answer (most test-takers guess B or C).
- Each question must include a reference to back-up why it is the correct answer.

**Sample Multiple Choice Question:**

Where do gastrointestinal stromal tumors most commonly occur?  

**[STEM]**

A. Esophagus  
B. Stomach  
C. Small bowel  
D. Colon

**Multiple Choice Focused Stem:**

What is the most common site of hematogenous metastases from colon carcinoma?

**Multiple Choice Unfocused Stem:**

Which of the following is true regarding autoimmune pancreatitis?
Brief Guide to Writing Good Multiple Choice Questions

The Multiple Choice Distractors (wrong choices):

- How many—must include at least 3
- MUST be plausible

DO: Keep the distractors:

- All about the same length (and the answer, too)
- Focused and parallel (for example, all are diagnoses, or radiographic findings, or therapies)
- Short and simple. Avoid lengthy modifiers or combining concepts in one item

DON’T:

- Use “always” or “never” (and no “maybe” terms, such as “...can sometimes...”, or “...is often...")
- Use “all of the above” or “none of the above"
- Use mutually exclusive, paired options. For example:
  A. Worse with head turned to the right
  B. Worse with head turned to the left
- “Highlight” any choices, such as with quotation marks or parentheses
- Give grammar clues. For example, if the stem asks for a plural response, be certain the distractors are plural, too.

If using Images in your questions:

A. They must be technically superb.
B. Choose classic examples.
C. The findings must be readily apparent. (no “eye tests”)