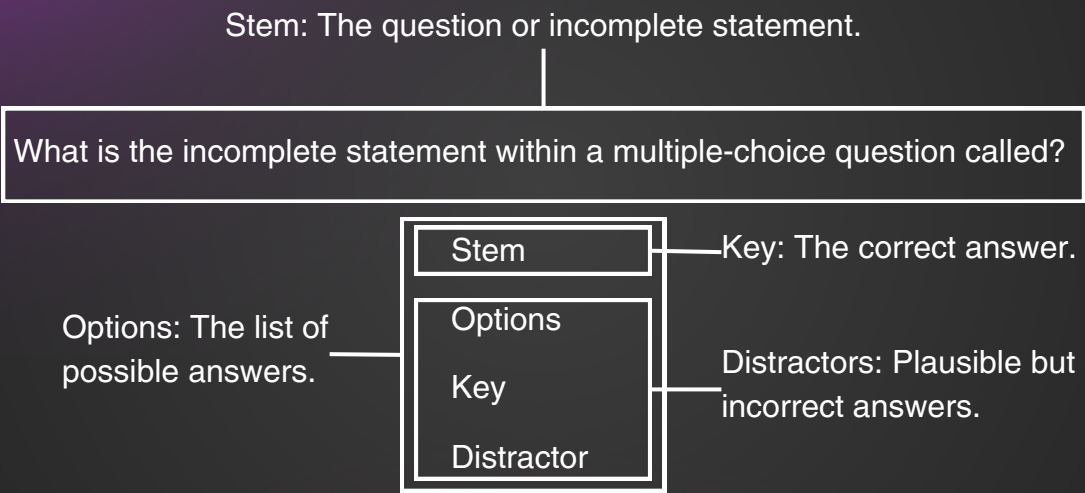# Effective Multiple-Choice Questions - Top Tips

Multiple choice questions remain one of the most powerful and simultaneously misused tools in the L&D toolbox.

Whether it's part of an ILT session or your latest piece of eLearning, great multiple-choice questions can have a big impact.

ANATOMY OF A MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTION

Every MCQ is made up of the same base components:

Stem: The question or incomplete statement.

What is the incomplete statement within a multiple-choice question called?

Stem
Options
Key
Distractor

Key: The correct answer.

Options: The list of possible answers.

Distractors: Plausible but incorrect answers.

WRITING GREAT STEMS

CLEAR AND CONCISE

Ensure the stem is easy to understand and free of unnecessary information.

✅

When was the Declaration of Independence signed?

❌

In what year was the Declaration of Independence signed by the Founding Fathers of the United States of America?

NEGATIVE PHRASING

Questions should asked in the positive for clarity. If you must ask in the negative, make it visually clear by using bolded text.

✅

Which of the following is a primary color?

❌

Which of the following is NOT a primary color?

CRAFTING EFFECTIVE DISTRACTORS

PLAUSIBLE DISTRACTORS

All distractors should be reasonable and based on common misconceptions.

BALANCED OPTIONS

Ensure options are similar in length, complexity, and grammatical structure.

SINGLE, CLEAR ANSWERS

Don't include "all/none of the above" options. These give learner's an easy opportunity to play to odds. Correctly answering questions with these options does not clearly show what the learner does/doesn't know.

TOP TIPS

- **Ambiguity:** Ensure there is no ambiguity in the stem or the options.
- **Trick Questions:** Avoid trying to mislead learners.
- **Overly Complex Language:** Keep language simple and appropriate for the audience.
- **Avoid cues to the Correct Answer:** Ensure that one answer is not obviously correct.

EVOLVE