

Open Professionals Education Network (OPEN) Resource Document  
Writing Multiple-Choice Questions: None of the Above

## Background

Instructors should avoid using “None of the above” as an answer choice in a multiple-choice question. If “None of the above” is an incorrect answer choice, it does not provide diagnostic information about the student's misconception if the student selects it. Also, if “None of the above” is the correct answer choice, it does not assess whether the student knows the correct answer to the question being asked (Gronlund, 1998). Most authors use “None of the above” when unable to think of another incorrect answer choice, and therefore it is rarely the correct answer choice. The savvy student can usually eliminate this as an answer choice making guessing easier. In general, avoid using “None of the above” in your questions and replace it with a plausible, but incorrect option.

## Check Your Understanding

Why should you avoid using “None of the above” as an answer choice in a multiple-choice question?

- A. When used as an incorrect answer choice, it provides diagnostic information about the student's misconception if they select it.
- B. When used as the correct answer choice, it does not assess the learning objective being assessed in the question.
- C. It is typically the correct answer when used as an answer choice.
- D. Including it as an option decreases a student's ability to guess the correct answer.

## Feedback

If you selected option B, you are correct! Using “None of the above” as a correct answer does not evaluate whether the student knows the correct answer to the question being asked, only that the student can identify incorrect options. In general, avoid using “None of the above” in your questions!

## Examples

For a healthcare provider to receive alerts and links to reference pages when using a CPOE system, the system must be integrated with which of the following types of systems?

- A. Laboratory system
- B. Billing system
- C. Clinical decision support system ✓
- ~~D. None of the above~~
- D. Care delivery system

According to the Institute of Medicine's publication *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century*, what were they hoping to remove from the healthcare system by 2010?

- A. Excess spending
- B. Paper charts ✓
- C. Medical errors
- ~~D. None of the above~~
- D. Insurance fraud

## Summary & Additional Resources

Creating multiple-choice questions, particularly the incorrect answer choices, is not an easy task. However, you want to make each incorrect answer choice reflective of a student misconception so that you and your students receive feedback about what they know and don't know. Using "None of the above" as one of those choices adds very little to the quality of your question.

### Reference:

Gronlund, N. E. (1998). *Assessment of student achievement*, (6<sup>th</sup> ed). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

### Additional Resources:

Waugh, C. K. & Gronlund, N. E. (2013). *Assessment of student achievement* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.en\\_US](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.en_US). Last updated December 5, 2014 by the Open Learning Initiative, Stanford University.