



Can every student read your multiple choice exams clearly?

Some students have difficulties just reading certain kinds of formatting on tests. You can make minor changes that will alleviate these problems which do not interfere with the type of testing you do, or cause extra work. Here are three examples and suggestions.

Problem 1: Some students with learning challenges may have trouble moving back and forth from the lower case letters on your exam to the uppercase letters on a machine-scorable answer sheet. Other students may get the letters “b” and “d” mixed up when they are lowercase. See this example:

1. Many multiple choice exams use **lower case letters** to identify the choices/answers. They look like this:
 - a. Answer one
 - b. Answer two
 - c. Answer three
 - d. Answer four

This is because the AutoFormat puts your indented words into outline form. Notice that it automatically uses lower case letters, and you can't change them to uppercase even if you use Caps Lock.

How can you help? Use **Capital Letters**. You can follow the directions below to deselect the Auto formatting.

1. Type your first test question stem. Press Enter and then Tab, and you will see a lower case “a.”
2. click on the small lightning bolt icon to the left of number 1. Choose “Stop Automatically Creating Numbered Lists.”
3. You will now be able to number, indent, and use Upper Case letters for your test items.

To change back to the Auto Formatting, follow these steps:

1. Go to the Format Menu and then click AutoFormat. Click “options” and then on the AutoFormat as You Type Tab, check the box that says “Automatic Numbered Lists” and you will be back in business.

Problem 2: A related problem is using more than one format to list your multiple choice answers/distractors. It can be very confusing to some students if in one question your item looks like this:

1. The question is
 - a. One
 - b. Three
 - c. Two
 - d. Four

And another question looks like this:

1. This question looks like
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four



Just navigating back and forth between finding “b” horizontally or vertically can put a student at risk for filling in the wrong answer on the machine-scorable answer sheet. Note that by position, C in the first question is the second answer down, but on the answer sheet it will be the third one over. Yikes!

If one style is used throughout the test, and if the style is modeled after the way the answers are listed on the answer sheet, students will be less likely to make a “transfer” error.

Problem 3: Students who use the CC TV to enlarge tests so they can see them can become rather disoriented as they move through the test if the directions for a section of a test are far removed (such as appearing on another page). For example, you may write **initial** directions that tell students that for True/False questions, A=True and B=False. But then the students might not encounter a T/F question for several pages.

It would be a helpful reminder if you insert directions right before the section of True/False questions starts. That way, the student whose test is highly magnified can see the directions and begin that new kind of marking right away.

Reading teachers call these things *comprehensibility* in a piece of reading. Seemingly insignificant aspects may not matter much to many of us, but for some people can make the difference between reading accurately or not. We hope that as teachers, we do not introduce or raise the chance of our students making errors that are unrelated to the content being assessed.