HOW TO AVOID ADVANTAGES FOR TESTWISE STUDENTS

Following are test design suggestions that reduce advantages for testwise students:

1. **Longest Answer**: Test wise students tend to pick the longest answer. To avoid this, keep your option lengths similar and be sure the longest answer is not always the right answer.

2. **“B” or “C” Answers**: Test wise students know that most teachers put the right answer in the “B” or “C” option. To avoid this, vary equally the placement of the correct answer among the possible answer options.

3. **“Extremes”**: Test wise students know that extreme words like “always” or “never” are in the wrong answers and are in fact put in the answer to make the option wrong.

4. **Opposites**: Test wise students understand that when answer options are opposite, one or the other has to be correct. To avoid this, make sure the answer options are homogenous or as similar as possible. If you feel that you have to use opposites in the answer options, provide two sets such that there are two opposites to two synonyms.

5. **Too Simple or Obvious**: Test wise students believe that the simple and obvious cannot be the correct answer. To avoid this, sometimes make the correct answer the simple and obvious.

6. **Stem and Choice Grammatical Structure**: When a test question has a plural structure and only one option for answers is in the plural, then it is obvious to test wise students which answer is correct. To avoid this, avoid a grammatical mismatch between the question stem and the answer options.

7. **“All the Above”**: When “All the Above” is used as an answer option on some of the questions, test wise students believe the option is there because the author of the test question couldn’t think of wrong options or false cases. And, the students are right. Most of the time, “All the Above” is the correct answer. Research shows that questions with “All the Above,” “None of the Above” and other complex options do not discriminate well among high performing and low performing students. These options should be avoided.

8. **Overlapping Choices**: Test wise students know that if answer options include two, three or more things, and some of the options have the same things in them, than the overlap is because something is correct within the overlap. To avoid this, write answer options so that one option is not included in another.

9. **Clues**: Answers to test questions can sometimes be found in the content of other test questions on the exam. To avoid giving clues to test wise students, make sure all the test questions are independent of one another and that clues to a question cannot be found somewhere else in the test.

10. **Verbal Association**: This happens when a word in the question is repeated in only the correct answer option. Avoid repeating words in the question and answer options or use a similar word in the correct answer option.

Resources: