

## WHAT ARE SHORT ANSWER OR FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS QUESTIONS?

These fixed response checks for learning ask students to supply the appropriate words, numbers, or symbols to answer a question or complete a statement. You may use them to minimize the guessing that students can do with multiple choice or true/false.

## WHEN DO I USE THEM?

Reserve short answer questions for situations where supplying the answer is a necessary part of the learning outcome you are measuring, such as:

- When you want students to recall information instead of recognize it
- When you use computational problems
- When multiple-choice or true-false questions would make the answer obvious

## HOW DO I USE THEM?

- Write items that require a single word answer or a brief but definite statement
- Avoid statements that are answered equally well by several terms
- A direct question is often more desirable than an incomplete statement
- Blank spaces should occur at the end of the statement rather than the beginning or within
- Omit only key words because the meaning of the question can be lost if you remove too many elements
- If the question requires a numerical answer, indicate the units in which it is to be expressed
- Avoid verbal clues and specific determiners (e.g., the, an, a)

## EXAMPLE

**Indefinite:** What is a red corpuscle? \_\_\_\_\_

**Better:** What structure in the blood carries oxygen to the cells of the human body? \_\_\_\_\_

**Best:** Which of the cells found in the human body carries oxygen to all other living cells? \_\_\_\_\_

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Kansas State University created a guide for creating good test questions called [\*Is This a Trick Question? A Short Guide to Writing Effective Test Questions.\*](#)