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? ________