

MassJCL Test Guidelines

Thanks for agreeing to write a test for our MassJCL Convention. As you write, please keep in mind these writing and formatting guidelines. Send any questions to tambauer@aol.com.

MULTI-CHOICE TEST WRITING

You will be writing 50 questions, each with ABCD options. The answer sheets also allow an E. If you are going to use ABCDE, use it consistently on every question.

The question should be clear and accurate. There should be one and only one correct answer. Ideally, the test-taker should know the answer before even reading the choices.

Coming up with appropriate distracters is the hardest part of this kind of test writing. Allow yourself time for this.

- Test one and one thing only with each question. In grammar, for example, give four verbs with different tenses but the same personal endings. Test either tense or personal endings, not both.
- The distracters should be consistent in length and detail to the correct answer (key).
- Do NOT use made up words for the distracters, i.e., a 3rd conjugation verb shown with a -bi-i future tense ending, or a phony name for a mythological or historical character.
- Avoid using "none of the above" as a distracter, especially just because you can't think of another one. Likewise, do not use that option only on questions where that is the correct answer.

Try to avoid using "Which of the following is NOT. . ." If you feel you must do so, use capitals AND bold-face for the word "not."

Please check your spelling of Roman and Greek names and terms. If a test-taker recognizes the misspelling in the key, for example, he or she may well think it is a trick rather than simply an error and may then choose a distracter instead.

Matching items are fine, especially for vocabulary or derivatives. Just remember that your answer options are only ABCDE, so put them in sets of five.

There are so many problems with TRUE/FALSE questions, that we prefer that you not use them at all.

CONTENT AND DIFFICULTY LEVELS

Please keep in mind that approximately half of our convention goers are

middle-school age and in their first year or two of Latin. Out of 50 questions, 25 to 30 should be easy.

On the other hand, we have seniors at exam schools who have had six or seven years of Latin and need a challenge. Having 10 hard to extremely hard questions will keep us from having too many ties. Make sure the question is hard because of content, not trickiness.

Plan ahead and distribute the questions evenly over the different areas of your subject. For example, 8 or 10 questions on the Roman baths is too many for Daily Life. Having 25 questions on the Roman monarchy is too many for History. Keep it even and be thorough.

If you have any questions about what is commonly taught, feel free to write me or another experienced secondary teacher.

FORMAT

I use a Mac. Therefore getting e-mail attachments is a problem. Most of the time it works better if you simply send the document within the text of an e-mail message. We can experiment ahead of time.

Attached is a sample first page so you may format your document to match, as much as convenient for you.

Use capital ABCD, followed by a single parenthesis, for answers.

If the answers are short, please put them on one line with five spaces between.

If answers are too long to fit on one line, please list them down the left side.