The purpose is the same as multiple-choice items. You can include a large number of these items on a single test during a typical class period. These items are relatively easy to construct and responses are easy to grade. Typical exercises include fill-in-the-blank or a question requiring at most a few sentences. In math, for example, completion/short-answer items make take the form of problems to solve. Be prepared for all possible responses. For example, when asked to name the first President of the United States one can expect George Washington, George, Washington, the guy that cut down the cherry tree, Martha’s Husband.
Item Writing Guidelines for Completion/Short Answer Items

1. Questions should be stated in such a way that only a specific and unique word or phrase can be the correct answer.

2. Omit only significant words from a statement to be completed.

3. Completion items should contain enough information so that a person who has mastered the material can tell precisely what is being asked.

4. For problems requiring numerical answers, specify the degree of precision required.
BAD Completion/Short-Answer Items

1. The executive, _______, and judicial ______ constitute a __________ of checks and ___ for the United States ______.

Why is this item BAD? Too many blanks and it is unclear what is expected. What should be placed in the last blank, one word or two? It reads as if a statement directly from a textbook. Does it really omit significant words?

2. The __________ River divides the states of __________ and ________________.

Why is this item BAD? A reasonable person could provide many answers making it difficult to determine which answer the instructor was looking for in a response.

GOOD Completion/Short-Answer Items

1. List the 3 branches of the U.S. Federal Government.

Why is this item GOOD? It requires a specific response that can only be the correct answer.

2. Which river serves as a border between Ohio and Kentucky.

Why is this item GOOD? Unlike item number 2 above, it is clear that there is only one correct response.

3. What is the volume of a tetrahedron with edge length of 1? Provide your response to the nearest thousandth.

Why is this item GOOD? The item contains enough information so that a student who has mastered calculating the volume of a tetrahedron can arrive at a correct response.

3. A ball is dropped from a height of 20 meters above the ground. As the ball falls, it increases in speed. The kinetic and potential energies of the ball will be equal at ________ meters.

Why is this item GOOD? It contains enough information for the student to answer correctly and the blank is at the end of the statement.