True/False items have been around the testing circles for a long time. Typically these items require learners to classify statements into one of two discrete categories:

- True-false
- Yes-No
- Correct-Incorrect
- Fact-Opinion

Most often these items are used to assess factual knowledge, although when written well they can assess higher order thinking (see the first GOOD EXAMPLE below).

The biggest limitation is that students can use a coin flip to answer the questions thus it is difficult to determine whether the students really know the material or they just guessed! After all, they have a 50/50 chance of answering correctly!
Item Writing Guidelines for True/False Items

✗ 1. Avoid specific determiners as clues (e.g., always, never).
✗ 2. Avoid a disproportionate number of either true or false statements.
✗ 3. Avoid exact wording from textbooks or other references.
✗ 4. Avoid trick statements.
✗ 5. Limit each statement to the exact point to be tested.
✗ 6. Avoid excess use of negative words or phrases.
✗ 7. Avoid ambiguous words or statements.
✗ 8. Avoid complex language and vocabulary and unnecessary complex sentence structure.
✗ 9. Require the simplest possible method of indicating a response to reduce confusion.
✗ 10. Use true-false items ONLY for points that lend themselves unambiguously to this kind of item.

BAD EXAMPLES:

1. Camping is fun for the whole family. True False
   Why is it BAD? This item is an opinion question and not a measure of student learning.

2. It never rains in Southern California. True False
   Why is it BAD? The use of the determiner, never, suggests that the item is false as we can find exceptions to most rules.

3. Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin in Springfield, Missouri. True False
   Why is it BAD? This item contains more than one concept. It could confuse learners as one part might be true while another might be false.

GOOD EXAMPLES:

1. In the equation, \( E=mc^2 \), when \( m \) increases \( E \) also increases. True False
   Why is it GOOD? All the commandments are followed. A bonus is that it requires some higher order thinking.

2. Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin. True False
   Why is it GOOD? It only has one idea in the item.