QUIZ REVIEW CHECKLIST

13 item-writing flaws

Read each multiple-choice item as a learner who skipped the course. If they could get it right from the wording alone, or get it wrong despite knowing the answer, the item has a flaw.

Quiz

Reviewer

Date

		FLAW	CHECK	FIX
Gives the answer away A test-wise learner scores without the knowledge.				
☐	1	**Longest option is correct**	Is the key longer or more detailed than the others?	Match length and detail across all options.
☐	2	**Stem word repeated in the key**	Does a distinctive word in the stem reappear only in the key?	Rephrase, or draw every option from the same family.
☐	3	**Grammatical cue**	Do "a/an", plurals or tense fit only one option?	Make every option fit the stem, or end it with a question.
☐	4	**Implausible distractor**	Would anyone who took the course pick it?	Replace it with a mistake people really make.
☐	5	**Absolute terms**	"Always", "never" or "only" in the options?	Remove them, or make sure they are sometimes the key.
Hard for the wrong reason Knowledgeable learners get it wrong.				
☐	6	**Negative stem**	Does the stem ask which is NOT, EXCEPT or LEAST?	Ask what to do in a situation. If you keep it, bold the NOT.
☐	7	**Double-barreled stem**	Does it ask two things at once?	Split it into two items.
☐	8	**Ambiguous item**	Could an expert defend a different option?	Tighten the stem or fix the options. Test it on a colleague.
☐	9	**Overlapping options**	Do ranges or categories share a value?	Make the options mutually exclusive.
☐	10	**Unbalanced options**	Mixed formats, tenses or lengths?	Keep the options parallel so none stands out.
Measures nothing useful The score says little about the skill.				
☐	11	**All of the above**	Is it one of the options?	Replace it with a single best answer.
☐	12	**None of the above**	Is it the key, or used in a best-answer item?	Use it rarely, and never in best-answer items.
☐	13	**Trivial recall**	Does it ask for a fact when the objective is a decision?	Put a realistic situation in the stem and ask what to do.

The five-minute review

for each item, in this order

1. Cover the stem and read only the options. If one stands out by length, detail or format, fix it.
2. Read the stem and the key together. If they share a distinctive word, rephrase.
3. Name the real mistake behind each distractor. If you cannot, replace it.
4. Check the level: does the item put the learner in a situation, as the objective asks, or only ask for a fact?
5. Have someone answer the quiz without the course. Well above chance means it measures test-wiseness.