



Guidelines to Writing Buzzer Questions for the National Ocean Sciences Bowl

The following are important basic guidelines for writing high quality questions for the National Ocean Sciences Bowl (NOSB). Questions that do not fall within these guidelines may be rejected by the Technical Advisory Panels (TAPs) that review all questions for the NOSB. Please read these carefully before you begin.

1. All questions and answers should be clear and unambiguous. Questions where there is more than one possible answer, or where the research cited may not be conclusive, should be avoided.
2. Toss-up questions are ALWAYS multiple choice. Bonus questions should be short answer.
3. “All of the above” and “None of the above” are NOT ACCEPTABLE answer choices for NOSB questions. Questions that include these choices as possible answers will be rejected.
4. Fill in the blank and True/False questions are NOT ACCEPTABLE. Questions that include fill in the blanks or True/False answers will be rejected.
5. Although writers may choose to select topics within their area of expertise and interest, please avoid writing all questions in one subject area or category. Categories for NOSB competitions include biological, chemical, geological, and physical oceanography, geography, technology, marine policy, and social science.
6. Please limit questions that have very similar topic coverage and/or phrasing. Examples of this include repeating the same question, but changing one word (“Name a benthic organism”; “Name a pelagic organism”; etc) or asking repetitious questions with slight modifications (“Which of these countries is landlocked?”; “Which of these countries is NOT landlocked?”; etc). Submission of questions on the same topic or with similar phrasing can result in a higher number of rejected questions.
7. Questions must be clearly related to ocean or freshwater science. The questions should not simply be about chemistry, geology, etc., but *ocean* chemistry, *ocean* geology, etc.
8. Questions should be written for the level and abilities of high school students who have taken at least the equivalent of an undergraduate introductory oceanography course. Students will be primarily using oceanography textbooks and scientific periodicals for their preparations. Please be sure that the reference material you use, especially periodical material, is current (within the last five (5) years).
9. Questions MUST include the phonetic pronunciation for longer scientific names and terminology.
10. Questions based on Wikipedia content or that do not contain references will NOT be accepted.

Any questions regarding these guidelines or writing questions for the NOSB, please contact the NOSB National Office at 202-448-1230.