Quick Reference Guide for Writing & Editing ABPath CertLink® Items

Critique:
Every Critique should have at least one parent item. Supporting justification in the Critique should provide clear and comprehensive explanations as to why the correct answer is accurate and why each distractor is incorrect.
- Check for misspelled words, punctuation and grammatical errors, and other typos.
- Italicize gene and bacteria names.

Stem:
- Provide a brief clinical history.
- The inclusion of age and gender in the stem is at the Item Writer’s discretion. If used, format age using hyphens (eg, “XX-year-old male/female”).
- Use male and female. Do not use terms including man, woman, boy, or girl.
- Review for grammar and use of past tense.
- Make certain the lead-in asks a question. A lead-in should read, “What is the most likely diagnosis?” rather than, “The most likely diagnosis is:” Lead-ins must clearly define the task so that the question can be answered before viewing the answer choices.
- If there is a list of laboratory results, put the list into a table.
- If there is a table, make certain that the lead-in (eg, “What is the most likely diagnosis?”) follows the table.
- Check for misspelled words, punctuation and grammatical errors, and other typos.
- Italicize gene and bacteria names.
- Read stem and distractors for sentence sense.
- Multiple true/false items are NOT acceptable (eg, “Which statement is correct about ‘X’?”).

Answer Choices:
- Alphabetize if necessary (make certain the correct answer is marked in the new order) unless listed in order of benign to malignant (NILM, LSIL, HSIL, SCC) or some other logic. In such cases, please indicate “DO NOT ALPHA” in the Comments box.
- Options are homogeneous, testing a single dimension (eg, all IHC, all diagnoses, all clinical associations, all genes).
- A lowercase letter begins each answer choice unless it is a name or a complete sentence.
- No period at the end of each answer choice unless it is a complete sentence.

Key Learning Objective (KLO) and Feedback/Diagnosis:
- Check for misspelled words, punctuation and grammatical errors, and typos.
- Italicize gene and bacteria names.
- Keep KLO brief (ie, one sentence or phrase).

References:
- DOI, PMID (PubMed), NLM, or ISBN numbers are preferred.
- Attribute source of images.

Item Type:
- If the item asks for recall of facts, it is a RECALL item.
- If the item has data to interpret (eg, lab results), it is a PRACTICAL item.
- If the item is associated with an image(s), it is a PRACTICAL W/ IMAGE item.

Practice Area:
- The Practice Area requested of an author must be the Primary one assigned to the item.
- Up to four Practice Areas can be assigned to one item if applicable to more than one area.
NOTES:

- No “Which of the following…”
- Immunoreactive “to” not “for”
- This lesion from the ___ of a 53-year-old male/female
- What is the most likely diagnosis for this ___ lesion from a 36-year-old male/female?
- What is the most likely diagnosis for this leg lesion (not lesion from the leg)?
- A patient with AIDS; not an AIDS patient
- Pregnant patient (not pregnant female)
- 2 cm, not 2cm; **BUT**: a 2-cm lesion
- No need to say male/female when stem refers to prostate/testicle/ovary/uterus. Instead, say “patient.”
- Capitalize any reference to race or ethnicity.
- AMA does not use the trademark symbol because of the capitalization of a trademark name.
- Do not use a/an or a(n) in the stem; instead, put “a” or “an” in the answer choices.
- Items test the application of knowledge based on cases/scenarios encountered in practice.
- Items have longer stems and shorter answer choices.
- No technical flaws or clues befitting test-wise diplomates.
- Items that require interpretation and application of knowledge are preferred.
- If an item mentions a “gene fusion” or “gene translocation,” make certain to use a double colon between the two (eg, EML4::ALK fusion; BCR::ABL fusion).