Concept Question 9-4: Why are the impulse responses of FIR filters almost always even or odd?

Because the phase of the frequency response of an even impulse response is 0 or 180^o, which amounts to multiplication by ±1, and the phase of the frequency response of an odd impulse response is $\pm 90^o$, which amounts to multiplication by ±j. Hence, the phase distortion induced by the filter is minimal.