

What is a Test?

A test is a device which is used to measure behavior of a person for a specific purpose. Moreover it is an instrument that typically uses sets of items designed to measure a domain of learning tasks. Tests are systematic method of collecting information that lead to make inferences about the characteristics of people or objects. A teacher must understand that educational test is a measuring device and therefore involves rules (administering, scoring) for assigning numbers that will be used for describing the performance of an individual. You should also keep in mind that it is not possible for a teacher to test all the subject matter of a course that has been taught to the class in a semester or in a year. Therefore, teacher prepares tests while sampling the items from a pool of items in such a way that it represents the whole subject matter. Teacher must also understand that whole content with many topics and concepts that have been taught within a semester or in a year cannot be tested in one or two hours. In simple words a test should assess content area in accordance with relative importance a teacher has assigned to them. It is believed most commonly that the meaning of a test is simple paper-and-pencil tests. But now-a-days other testing procedures have been developed and are practiced in many schools. Even tests are of many types that can be placed into two main categories. These are:

- (i) Subjective type tests



- (ii) Objective type tests

At elementary level students do not have much proficiency of writing long essay type answer of a question, therefore, objective type tests are preferred. Objective type tests are also called selective-response tests. In this types of tests responses of an item are provided and the students

are required to choose correct response.



The objective types of tests that are used at elementary level are:

- (i) Multiple choice
- (ii) Multiple Binary-choice
- (iii) Matching items

You will study about the development process of each of these items in next units. In this unit you have been given just an idea that what does a test mean for a teacher. Definitely after going through this discussion you might be ready to extract yourself from the above mentioned paragraphs that why it is important for a teacher to know about a classroom test.

What purpose it serves? The job of a teacher is to teach and to test for the following: Purposes of test: You have learned that a test is a simple device which measures the achievement level of a student in a particular subject and grade.

Purpose of a Test

Assessment of a student in class is inevitable because it is integral part of teaching learning process. Assessment on one hand provides information to design or redesign instruction and on the other hand it promotes learning. Teachers use different techniques and procedures to assess their students i.e tests, observations, questionnaires, interviews, rating scales, discussion etc. A teacher develops, administers, and marks academic achievement and other types of tests in order to measure the ability of a student in a subject or measures behavior in class or in school. What are these tests? Does a teacher really need to know that what is test? Yes, it is very important. The teaching-learning process remains incomplete if a teacher does not know that how well her class is doing and to what extent her teaching is effective in terms of achievement of pre defined objectives. There are many technical terms which are related with assessment. Before we go any further, it would be beneficial to define first what is a test.

Therefore we can say that a test is used to serve the following purposes:

1. Monitoring Student Progress

Why should teacher assess their students? The simple answer is that it helps teachers to know whether their students are making satisfactory progress. We must realize that the appropriate use of tests and other assessment procedures allows a teacher to monitor the progress of their students. A useful purpose of classroom test is to know whether students are satisfactorily moving towards the instructional goals. After knowing the weaknesses if any, the teacher will modify her/his instructional design. If the progress is adequate there will be no need of instructional changes. The results obtained during the monitoring of students progress can further be utilized for making formative assessment of their instructional procedures. Formative evaluation provides feedback to students as well as to the teachers.

2. Diagnosing Learning Problems

Identification of students strength and weaknesses is one of the main purpose of a test. An elementary teacher needs to know that whether a student is comprehending the content that he/she reads. If he/she reads with certain difficulties, then definitely as a teacher you have to address the problem instructionally. Otherwise, it will be wastage of time and energy if students do not comprehend but the teacher is moving forward.

Thus by measuring students current status teacher can determine:

- (i) How to improve students weaknesses through instructional changes?
- (ii) (ii) How to instructionally avoid already mastered skills and knowledge?

The diagnosis taken before instruction is usually referred as pre-testing or preassessment. It provides the teacher that what is the level of previous knowledge the students possess at the beginning of instruction.

3. Assigning Grades

A teacher assigns grade after scoring the test. The best way to assign grades is to collect objective information related to student achievements and other academic accomplishments. Different institutions have different criteria for assigning the grades. Mostly alphabets 'A, B, C, D, or F are assigned on the bases of numerical evidence.

4. Classification and Selection of Students

A teacher makes different decisions regarding the classification, selection and placement of students. Though these terms are used interchangeably, but technically they have different meanings. On the bases of test scores students are classified in to high ability, average ability and low ability groups. Or test can be used to classify students having learning disabilities, emotionally disturbed children, or some other category of disability (speech handicap etc). On

the basis of test score students are selected or rejected for admission in schools, colleges and or in other institutions. As contrary to selection, while making placement decisions no one is rejected rather all students are placed in various categories of educational levels, for example regular, remedial, or honors.

5. Evaluating Instruction

Students' performance on tests helps the teacher to evaluate her/his own instructional effectiveness or to know that how effective their teaching has been. A teacher teaches a topic for two weeks. After the completion of topic the teacher gives a test. The score obtained by students show that they learned the skills and knowledge that was expected to learn. But if the obtained score is poor, then the teacher will decide to retain, alter or totally discard their current instructional activities.