

## Examples of Common Sources of Bias in Classroom Assessment

### 1. Problems common to all methods:

#### A. Potential problems that can occur within the student:

Lack of reading proficiency  
Language barriers  
Emotional upset  
Poor health  
Physical handicap  
Peer pressure to mislead assessor  
Lack of motivation at time of assessment  
Lack of testwiseness (understanding how to take tests)  
Lack of personal confidence leading to evaluation anxiety

#### B. Possible problems that can occur within the assessment context:

Noise distractions  
Poor lighting  
Discomfort  
Lack of rapport with assessor  
Cultural insensitivity in assessor or assessment  
Lack of proper equipment

#### C. Examples of problems that arise from the assessment itself (regardless of method)

Directions missing or vague  
Poorly worded questions  
Poor reproduction reduces readability

### 2. Problems unique to each format:

#### A. Possible problems with multiple choice tests:

More than one correct response  
Incorrect scoring key  
Incorrect bubbling on answer sheet  
Clues to the answer in the item or in other items

#### B. Problems with essay assessments

Students lack writing skill  
No scoring criteria  
Inappropriate scoring criteria  
Evaluator untrained in applying scoring criteria  
Bias due to stereotypic thinking or knowledge of prior performance  
Insufficient time or patience to read and score carefully

#### C. Potential problems with performance assessment

No scoring criteria  
Inappropriate scoring criteria  
Evaluator untrained in applying scoring criteria  
Bias due to stereotypic thinking or knowledge of prior performance  
Insufficient time or patience to observe and score carefully

#### D. Possible difficulties when using personal communication

Insufficient sample per student  
Inaccurate record keeping  
Distortions in memory of performance  
Bias due to stereotypic thinking or knowledge of prior performance

## COMPARISON OF PAPER AND PENCIL ITEM TYPES

Item Type	Used When	Advantage	Limitations
Multiple Choice	There is only one right answer. There are several plausible alternatives to the correct answer.	Can measure a variety of objectives. Easy to score. Can cover lots of material efficiently.	Can't measure extended thinking or performance. Not good for assessing the process by which answers are obtained.
True/False	A large domain of content is to be tested, requiring the use of many test items.	Can ask many questions in a short time. Easy to score.	Can't measure extended thinking or performance Not good for assessing the process by which answers are obtained. Can be trivial or misleading if not written carefully.
Matching	There are many related thoughts or facts; you want to measure association of information.	Can cover lots of material efficiently. Easy to score.	Can't measure extended thinking. Assess identification of an answer rather than production.
Completion	A clear, short answer is required.	Assessing production of a response. Reduces the possibility of guessing. Can cover lots of material efficiently.	Can't measure extended thinking or performance. Takes longer to score.
Essay/Written	Can measure extended thinking. Can assess student ability to organize thoughts and compose an appropriate response.	Assesses production of a response, not just identification of a response. Chance plays little or no part in adequate responding. Can be used to assess the process by which an answer is obtained.	Harder to score reliably. Harder to come up with criteria for scoring. Provides a limited sample of knowledge areas. Inability to write can interfere with ability to show understanding.