

TEST

Etymologically speaking, the word 'test' is derived from the Latin word 'testum' which means a small earthen pot. In the past, metal mixtures were tried out by melting them in a special type of earthen pot to see whether some purified metal is left in the pot or not. So in a test, we are able to find out at once whether the taught material is still in the mind of the student or not. In a test, questions are asked from that part which has been taught so that the teacher can know whether the students have understood it or not.

EXAMINATION

The word 'Examine' is taken from the Latin word "Examen" which means the pointer of a balance. As the pointer indicates by its movement whether the weight in the two pans is equal or not, in an examination, a candidate is weighed as if in a balance. He is compared with some standards which are fixed by the examining authorities. Thus through examination, the examining bodies compare the students with those standards in order to judge their success or failure.

HOW EXAMINATION IS DIFFERENT FROM TEST

Examination and test are not synonyms to each other. Rather, these two terms are different. Examination is different from the test in the following ways:

Broader term: Examination is a broader term whereas test is a narrow one. In an examination any type of question can be asked provided that it is not beyond the standard which the examination seeks to establish. But in a test, it is not fair to ask something which has not been taught.

More formal: Examination is more formal as compared to test. In case of an examination, all types of formalities are observed like declaration of the date sheet a few days in advance, setting of question papers, seating arrangements and formal way of writing the answers in the examination hall etc. There is no need of such formality for taking a test.

Classification: Examination is mainly of three types i.e. annual system, semester system and trimester system of examination which also include practical. Tests are classified into weekly tests, monthly tests, class tests, first house test, second house test, oral test etc.

Concerned with Writing only: Our examination system is basically concerned with writing the answers only. Answers are checked by the examiners and the scores are awarded. But in tests, especially in oral tests, speaking ability of the

students is checked. Such tests can also be put to test the reading and listening abilities of the students.

Use in Research: Scores obtained through examination are more reliable for doing the research work as these scores are considered as the achievement scores of students by the research worker. But the test scores may or may not be taken for the research purpose.

IMPORTANCE OF TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS

The best formula for a good teacher is that he should take the test after the completion of every topic. Then he should start teaching the next topic, otherwise it will lead to 'haste makes waste'. The tests and examinations are of great importance. The following are the points which show their unique importance:

For Judging the ability of a Teacher: Tests and examinations are important because they are helpful in judging one's ability as a teacher.

For Judging the ability of the Students: Tests and examinations are important because they are useful in checking the ability of the students.

Means of Promotion: Tests and examinations help the teacher to classify the students. Through tests and examinations, the teacher can find out whether a particular student should be promoted to the next higher class or not.

Selection of Teaching Method: Tests and examinations are important because they help the teacher in the selection of a particular teaching method. While teaching, the teachers conduct some experiments. Sometimes, the best method for one class might prove to be the worst for some other class. Only tests and examinations can help them to find out which method is better.

To know the difficult part of the syllabus: Tests and examinations are important because they assist the teacher in knowing the difficult parts of the syllabus. The teacher can then solve it by re-teaching that part of the syllabus.

To develop the healthy spirit of competition: Tests and examinations are important because they help in developing the healthy spirit of competition among the students. It helps them to aspire for higher goals as each one of them makes effort to excel the other.

To rectify the mistakes: Tests and examinations are also important as they help the students in knowing their mistakes. Thus, they can rectify them and improve their learning.

To motivate the students: Tests and examinations are also important as they motivate the students to work hard all the more.

To determine the individual differences: Tests and examinations also help in determining the individual differences among the students. Through them, the teacher can find out some students who may be assigned some duty or responsibility and also some other students who need special coaching classes.

Self-assessment: Tests and examinations are important because they help the students in self-assessment and re- assurance of their competence.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD TEST IN ENGLISH

The characteristics of a good test in English are given as under:

Test the taught material: A good test is that which tests only what has been taught. It does not test that material which has not been taught. The questions aim at testing the candidate's real mastery of structures and vocabulary items taught to him rather than testing his knowledge of certain memorized answers.

Carefully prepared: A good test is carefully prepared, keeping in view the average, above average and below average students. It also takes into account the aims of teaching English and serves as the basis to find out whether the aims have been achieved or not.

Scorable: A good test is easily and fairly scorable. That is why in a good test of English, objective type and short answer type questions are included in order to make the marking objective.

Instructions: In a good test, instructions for the students are clearly and specifically given. There is nothing vague in it.

Selection of the test items: In a good test, the test items are selected according to the mental level of the students.

Neither too long nor too short: A good test is neither too long nor too short. The questions are of such type that can be answered in the prescribed time limit.

Syllabus: As far as possible, a good test covers maximum area of the prescribed syllabus. All the sections of the syllabus are covered in a good test and due weightage is given for testing knowledge of text-books, grammar, vocabulary and composition.

Language clarity: In a good test, simple, precise and clear language is used. No ambiguous question is asked.

Question number and sections: All the sections are marked and all the question numbers are clearly written. The division of marks should be mentioned after every question.

Balanced type: There is due emphasis on the various skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Neatly printed: A good test is neatly printed. All the test items are easily legible.

TYPES OF EXAMINATIONS

Examination is based on the type of questions set:

Essay type examination

Short answer type examination

Objective type examination

Essay type examination: In an essay type examination, all the set questions are of subjective nature and the students are expected to write lengthy answers. Here, the students write the answers according to their desire. They are not asked to write the answers of less-than 1000 words for a single question. These type of questions are attempted nicely by those students who are having a very good cramming power. The examiner is free to evaluate and award the students the way he likes. That is why this type of examination has low reliability and validity.

Short answer type examination: In this type of examination, all the set questions are to be answered in a few lines. Each question should not exceed 250 words. Here, the examiner has less liberty as the answer is crisp and precise. The short answer type examination has more reliability and validity as compared to the essay type examination.

Objective type examination: In this type of examination the students write the answers objectively and to the point. The examiner marks the answers objectively. There is no possibility of favouritism to any particular student. Usually, in an objective type examination, the students need to answer in one or two words only. This is the latest trend for testing the abilities of a student. The only drawback in this type of examination is, some students may try to do guess work especially in multiple choice questions, while some others may try to copy the answers from the students sitting next to them. Such defects can be removed by giving negative marks to the students. Copying may be stopped by giving severe punishment. So, this type of examination is more reliable, valid, comprehensive, easy to score and less time-consuming.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ESSAY TYPE EXAMINATION AND OBJECTIVE TYPE EXAMINATION

Essay type Examination	Objective type Examination
1. In this type of examination, all the set questions are of essay type nature.	1. In this type of examination all the set questions are of objective type nature.
2. It is subjective in nature.	2. It is objective in nature.
3. In this type, the students are to write lengthy answers i.e. of not less than 1000 words.	3. In this type, the students are to answer in one or two words only or sometimes they have to tick the write answer or make the right choice.
4. Here, the students are to answer the questions according to their own desire.	4. Here, the students are to answer the questions objectively and to the point.
5. Here more freedom is given to the examiner for awarding the attempted question.	5. No freedom is given to the examiner for awarding objective type questions. He has to award marks for the right answer and no mark is to be given for the wrong answer.
6. There is a great possibility of favouritism.	6. Here, there is no possibility of favouritism and disfavouritism.
7. This type of examination basically tests the writing ability and cramming power of the students.	7. This type of examination tests the understanding ability of the students.

8. This type of examination is less reliable and valid.

8. This type of examination is more reliable and valid.

WHICH ONE IS BETTER

Both essay-type examination and objective-type examination are good. The selection of one type of examination for testing the various skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing depends upon the following factors as both these types of examination work wonders in different situations. The factors are:

1. Age of learner.
2. Mental level of the learner.
3. Social background of the learner.
4. The class in which English was introduced
5. Ability of the learner.
6. Ability of the teacher.
7. Knowledge of writing mechanism.

SOME OF THE EXAMPLES OF OBJECTIVES TYPE QUESTIONS

Example (1): Given are a few statements. Write 'true' or 'false' as the case may be, in front of each statement.

- (i) English is a phonetic language.
- (ii) There are 28 alphabets in English language.
- (iii) No two languages are exactly alike.
- (iv) No two words of English are exactly the same.
- (v) English language has five vowel sounds.

Example (2) : Here below some words are given, out of which some words are spelled correct and some are wrong. In front of each word 'T' and 'F' are given. Encircle T like (T) if the word is correct and encircle F like (F) if it is wrong.

- (i) Season T F
- (ii) Platphorm T F
- (iii) Book T F
- (iv) Fut. T F

Example (3) : In the pairs of words given below the opposite gender is the main consideration. In front of each pair 'T' and 'F' are given. Encircle on the 'T' if it is true otherwise on 'F'.

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Example (8): Completion type questions : e.g.

- (a) Complete the following sentences:
 - (i) Although he wants to come.....
 - (ii) In spite of hard work.....
 - (iii) He is too rich
- (b) Complete the following words :-
 - (i) C__tt__n.
 - (ii) P__rs__n.

SOME WAYS AND MEANS FOR TESTING DIFFERENT SKILLS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

We teach English so that the students may acquire the different skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the examinations, therefore, all the four skills should be tested.

Sample Questions for Testing the Listening Ability

The teacher reads a story or a passage two or three times. Then he puts some questions and the students are asked to speak the answers. They will be able to do so if they have listened carefully.

The teacher shows a big picture and make statements, some of them are right and some of them are wrong. The students write ‘R’ for the right statement and ‘W’ for the wrong statement.

The teacher reads a paragraph loudly with some words missing in it. Then he reads out the paragraph completely and then the students are asked to fill in the missing words.

The teacher writes in two columns the words having almost the same pronunciation. Then he pronounces a word. The students are asked to tell the name of the column out of which it is spoken. e.g.

Column A	Column B
Verse	Worse
Wine	Vine
Well	Wall
Vase	Base

The teacher gives some command like ‘close the door’, ‘stop writing’ etc. The students will be able to carry out the commands if they have listened them correctly.

Sample Questions for Testing the Speaking Ability

Simple conversation may be held between the teacher and the student at the early stages of learning the language and at the higher stage, conversation

may be of advanced type.

A topic for extempore may be given to the students and they are asked to speak on the same for 2-3 minutes.

Debate, declamation contest, elocution etc. type of competitions may be organized in the class to test their speaking ability.

Some situation is created in the class with the help of a picture/ chart. Then the students are asked to speak a few sentences concerning it.

Sample Questions for Testing the Reading Ability: Reading is of two types. (1) Loud reading , (2) Silent reading

Loud reading can be tested by asking the students to read loudly. It is noticed that whether the reader does so correctly or not. His way of stressing the words and pauses at the words and pauses at the right place, are also taken into consideration.

Silent reading can be tested in a number of ways as mentioned below:

The teacher shows some flash cards carrying some written commands. The students obey by reading them silently.

Different words are written on different flash cards. Then the students are asked to frame sentences by using those words.

Different sentences are written on the flash cards. They are mixed up. Then the teacher speaks a sentence. The students pick up that card on which that sentence is written. They can do it if they are able to read the sentence silently.

Matching type exercises may be given to the students. They will be able to do it if they can read it silently. True/false or yes/no type questions may also be given to the students.

Simple comprehension paragraph may be given to the students. The students are asked to answer the questions after reading the paragraph silently.