

Choosing between Objective and Subjective Test Items

There are two general categories of test items: (1) objective items which require students to select the correct response from several alternatives or to supply a word or short phrase to answer a question or complete a statement; and (2) subjective or essay items which permit the student to organize and present an original answer. Objective items include multiple-choice, true-false, matching and completion, while subjective items include short-answer essay, extended-response essay, problem solving and performance test items. For some instructional purposes one or the other item types may prove more efficient and appropriate. To begin our discussion of the relative merits of each type of test item, test your knowledge of these two item types by answering the following questions.

Test Item Quiz (check the box)	True	False	Not Sure...
1. Essay exams are easier to construct than are objective exams.			
2. Essay exams require more thorough student preparation and study time than objective exams.			
3. Essay exams require writing skills where objective exams do not.			
4. Essay exams teach a person how to write.			
5. Essay exams are more subjective in nature than are objective exams.			
6. Objective exams encourage guessing more so than essay exams.			
7. Essay exams limit the extent of content covered.			
8. Essay and objective exams can be used to measure the same content or ability.			
9. Essay and objective exams are both good ways to evaluate a student's level of knowledge.			