

Avoiding Test Bias

GLOSSARY

Assessment alignment – When an assessment is based upon content standards. Assessment items are written to measure students' knowledge and skills related to specific, grade-level, content standards.

Assessment bias – When an assessment has scores that are impacted based upon membership to a group such as socioeconomic class, race, or gender causing unfair penalization. Students have scores that are not based upon knowledge or ability – but upon group membership.

Bias in construct validity – When a test measures the same trait for groups but with differing degrees of accuracy.

Bias in content validity – When an item or test is more difficult for members of one group than another.

Bias in item selection – When the items and tasks selected for a test are based on the learning experiences and language of the dominant group.

Cultural bias – When a test makes assumptions about what is common knowledge.

Disparate impact – When one group of students performs differently than another group of students on the same assessment – any test or educational statistic in which minorities are rated more poorly.

Distractors – See *Foils*.

Ethnic Bias or racial bias – Occurs when members of a group are portrayed in a stereotypical manner.

Foils – The answer choices in a test. The correct foil is called the KEY, incorrect foils are called DISTRACTORS.

Gender bias – When an assessment includes items that depict males or females in a stereotypical manner; when males and females with the same skills and knowledge obtain different scores on a test.

Key – See *Foils*.

Language bias – When English second language learners are penalized because of their lack of knowledge of the English Language when what is being tested isn't their language ability.

Racial bias – See *Ethnic bias*.

Regional bias – When a test uses regionally specific names or dialects.

Socio-economic bias – When an assessment is not measuring the intended knowledge and skill but instead the students' life experiences.

Special needs bias – When disabled students are not given enough time to test or when their disability is not accommodated.

Universal design – When test items are accessible to all.