Ohio Department of Education

Test Specifications

What are test specifications?

The Test Specifications document is an essential tool for the development of a valid and reliable test. Test specifications provide an overview of the structure and content of a specific content/grade level state summative test. This overview includes a description of the test design as well as information on the types of items that will appear on the test. Just as an engineer creates a diagram - or blueprint - to serve as a guide for the construction of a building, test specifications are the specific plan for how to meet the test blueprint in order to build a test. A test blueprint is included as part of the item specifications, composed of a table identifying the range and distribution of items and points, grouped into test reporting categories. The test specifications also provide specific guidelines for the development of all items used for a state summative test.

The test specifications document is intended to be a resource not only for item writers and test designers, but for Ohio educators and other stakeholders who are interested in a deeper understanding of the state summative test. Test specifications prescribe alignment to learning standards, cognitive complexities, possible item types and other established item design criteria essential to developing test forms aligned to the test blueprint. Test specifications may also guide test construction at the classroom level and provide additional insight into evidences of learning standard mastery.

What information is shared through test specifications?

The following information is included in test specifications

Reporting Categories

Learning standards are placed into reporting categories and these categories define how test data is reported for a test. Each test has three to five reporting categories. Reporting categories represent groups of similar student skills or learning standards assessed within each grade and subject.

Depth of Knowledge/Cognitive Demand

Depth of Knowledge/Cognitive Demand refers to the complexity of thinking skills required to successfully complete a task. Complexity relates to the level of thinking and/or the abstractness of the task, as opposed to difficulty of the question (amount of time, effort, or work required). Depth of Knowledge is used for ELA, Math, and Social Studies and Cognitive Demand is used for Science.

Item Type(s)

A list of possible item types or tasks that may be used on a test.

Content Limits/ Constraints

Statements that provide limitations on content based on grade level expectations.

Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Level	Approximate Portion of Test
1 (Recall)	9 – 16 points
2 (Skills/Concepts)	23 – 33 points
3 (Strategic Thinking)	5 – 13 points

Cognitive Demand (CD) Level	Approximate Portion of Test
T = Designing Technological/Engineering Solutions Using Science Concepts	6 – 11 points
D = Demonstrating Science Knowledge	
C = Interpreting and Communicating Science Concepts	28 – 32 points
R = Recalling Accurate Science	17 – 21 points

How can test specifications be used in the classroom?

Designing Curriculum
Create your local instructional calendar

Identify standards that can be grouped together into units of instruction based on a common topic, theme, or concept. Determine the amount of local instructional time to spend on each unit.

Planning Instruction
Dig Deep into Learning Standards

Determine the depth of the standard and the specific skills related to it. Plan instructional activities that allow all students to engage in rigorous grade level content at different levels of cognitive complexity.

Creating Local Assessments
Assess Content in the Classroom

Design local assessments based on units of instruction that assess rigorous grade level content at different levels of complexity.