

Good CAT, Bad CAT

Classroom Assessment helps individual college teachers obtain useful feedback on what, how much, and how well their students are learning. Faculty can then use this information to refocus their teaching to help students make their learning more efficient and more effective.

Characteristics of Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)

Good CAT



Bad CAT



They are likely to make a difference. They focus on things that can be changed during the course of one term.

How well can students integrate key points into a coherent summary?

How well can students identify problems, explore solutions, prioritize solutions, and revise priorities as a means for purposeful action?

They are simple and easy to use.

One-Sentence Summary (CAT 13)
A technique in which the learner tries to summarize information by answering the question, “Who does what to whom, when, where, how and why?”

The student tries to identify the *elements of reasoning* within a written piece and must construct a critical analysis and evaluation of the reasoning.

They produce results that are easy to analyze.

The responses were sorted into three piles – excellent, adequate, or poor.

The student responses were assessed with a rubric to determine two things. First, if they are able to identify the 8 elements of reasoning. Second, the degree to which they are using each of the elements.

They provide useful information about what students have or have not learned.

Most students could not summarize a 50-minute lecture in any useful, meaningful way.

Most students couldn’t relate to the terminology since it wasn’t covered in the particular course. Some students had learned elements of reasoning in another course and some had not.

They provide information to students and teachers about the kinds of changes needed to improve learning.

The instructor decided to teach his students to summarize by stopping regularly after 15 to 20 minutes to ask them to practice summarizing.

The instructor determined that the course alone didn’t provide adequate learning opportunities to achieve the critical thinking learning goal and that the assessment was broader than a single course.

They reinforce and enhance learning the content or skill being assessed.	In this example, students practiced their new skill by summarizing the course content.	In this example, the students were overwhelmed by the assessment and could barely begin because of the unfamiliarity of the terminology used.
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Source: Classroom Assessment Techniques by Angelo and Cross (1993)

The good CAT in this case follows the definition. It also matches, one by one, the characteristics listed in the column on the left.

Although it has some good assessment qualities overall, the bad CAT in this case is far too big to meet the CAT definition and individual characteristics. The learning that it attempts to assess cannot be taught within the context of one course and does not permit the instructor to make changes during that semester to improve learning (close the loop). It might be more appropriate for a program or general education assessment.

Prepared by members of the Assessment Advisory Group