

Keep Peter Strutt's Checklist in Mind When Writing Tests

- 1) There is no point in giving a test if you do not need or will not use the information, if you cannot interpret the results, or if you will not believe them if they go against your expectations.
- 2) Tests will always have an effect on the teaching and the syllabus (the washback effect). Try to ensure that a test will have a beneficial effect by testing important, meaningful skills / abilities / knowledge.
- 3) Tests should be valid: they should test what you really want to measure and find out. The test designer should be clear about what exactly s/he wants to test, and as far as possible ensure that the test measures that and not irrelevant abilities or knowledge. For example, minor problems of spelling of responses should not be taken into account in a test of listening comprehension.
- 4) Tests should be practicable – not require too much equipment or special conditions.
- 5) Tests should be reliable as is practical: we need to be sure that the results are believable – that similar results would have been obtained on similar occasions by the same trainees, even with different markers.
- 6) Always pilot a test: other people will see ambiguities where the test designer only saw one possible interpretation. Always try the test out on colleagues, and if possible, a control group.
- 7) Foresee all possible answers.
- 8) Test instructions should be clear, precise, and simple. If they have to be complex, or long, it is better to give them in the native language.
- 9) Define the criteria for marking in advance among markers.
- 10) Since language is used in context for a purpose, avoid decontextualized test items.
- 11) In multiple choice questions (MCQ), the distractors should distract, and for relevant reasons. For example, the options should be of equal length, and difficulty.
- 12) Avoid culture bias.
- 13) Write a varying range of test items that will collect an adequate sample for measurement purposes.
- 14) Test tasks should be as similar as possible to the real world communicative use of language. For example, for a writing task, a test taker should be given something to write to someone (not the examiner) for a valid reason.
- 15) Beware of marking as incorrect any responses which are possible in some regional variety of English, or possible in the spoken form not the written form.
- 16) Testing should be seen in a humanistic light with tests written and administered so as to minimize anxiety on the part of the test taker.

For the complete list, see: Strutt, 1999.

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(which includes some helpful advice from the IATEFL Yorkshire, UK, 8 - 12 April 2006)

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Be sure to meet with various publishers for their test recommendations.

**TESOL France – 30 Nov. + 1 Dec. in Paris
and Ian Bell's “Developing Tests” 19 Jan.**

**For more information about TESOL France visit:
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BESIG 2007 POP QUIZ – BETHANY CAGNOL – BERLIN

What's wrong with this test? How many problems / mistakes can you find?

Richard _____ the tickets.

- a) already bought b) has already bought c) has already bought d) buy

I'm not as clever as you. You are _____ than me.

- a) cleverer than b) cleverer as c) clever than d) more clever

If I were you _____ go home.

- a) I'd go b) I go c) I'll go d) I'm go

In the museum, they showed a famous painting _____ Monet.

- a) of b) by c) with d) for

Which of the following is an example of an uncountable noun?

- a) apple b) banana c) strawberry d) fruit

Those are Jenny's books.

- a) Who has those books? b) Whose books are those? c) For whom are those books?
d) Who has Jenny's books?

She had learned about Canadian culture before she came to Vancouver.

- a) First she learned about Canadian culture, then she came to Vancouver.
b) First she came to Vancouver, then she learned about Canadian culture.
c) She learned about Canadian culture and came to Vancouver at the same time.
d) She learned about Canadian culture but didn't come to Vancouver.

I'm tired _____ this test!

- a) to have done b) to this c) for do d) of doing

Choose the correct sentence.

- a) The woman who lives next door is on vacation.
b) The woman, who lives next door is on vacation.
c) The woman, who lives next door, is on vacation.
d) The woman who lives next door, is on vacation.

Complete the sentence

"I'm going to Berlin next week." "Oh really? Which airline _____ on?"

Most British people _____ wages at the end of the week.

Write a few words about your job.

What do you like?