

# Educational Assessment Australia

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# **Writing Good Assessments 2009**

## **Principles of Test Construction**

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# The underpinnings of good test construction

## A good test paper must

1. have a spread of **skills** – a good balance of ‘easy’, ‘not-so-easy’ and ‘challenging’ items
2. have a spread of **content/topics/areas** – interests to suit different groups of test-takers by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic and experiential backgrounds
3. have embedded ‘**fairness**’ in terms of cognitive and linguistic challenge
4. be a ‘**graded**’ paper progressing from easy (‘hors d’oeuvre’ items) to the ‘most challenging’ (‘culturally challenging dishes?’) items

# Test Construction Procedures: 'Pitfalls' or what to avoid

A good test paper must avoid

- × ethno-cultural and social **stigmatisation** or **stereotyping**
- × situations/scenarios that are entirely **far-fetched, implausible** and unlikely to stimulate (even if highly imaginative)
- × **gender bias** and stereotyping
- × **taboo subjects/topics** which are likely to unsettle or rile test takers
- × **overly familiar**/commonly available material
- × **unrealistic goals/performance** levels

# The 'final look' of a paper

The test/paper, as a whole, must

- ✓ 'engage' and stimulate the target group – have **validity** (relevance and authenticity)
- ✓ possess a **sound educational focus** – (i.e. 'evoke curiosity') – have **validity, beneficial backwash**
- ✓ possess a **sound architecture or structure** - appearing well-balanced and accurate in its measurement – have **reliability**
- ✓ **NOT** be cumbersome to administer – have **economy/practicality**