



## 21 Summative Assessment Examples

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Summative assessment is a type of [achievement assessment](#) that occurs at the end of a unit of work. Its goal is to evaluate what students have learned or the skills they have developed. It is compared to a [formative assessment](#) that takes place in the middle of the unit of work for feedback to students and learners.

Performance is evaluated according to specific criteria, and usually result in a final grade or percentage achieved.

The scores of individual students are then compared to established benchmarks which can result in significant consequences for the student.

A traditional example of summative evaluation is a standardized test such as the SATs. The SATs help colleges determine which students should be admitted.

However, summative assessment doesn't have to be in a paper-and-pencil format. Project-based learning, performance-based assessments, and authentic assessments can all be forms of summative assessment.

### Real Life Summative Assessment Examples

- Final Exams for a College Course: At the end of the semester at university, there is usually a final exam that will determine if you pass. There are also often formative tests mid-way through the course (known in England as ICAs and the USA as midterms).
- Sporting Competitions: A sporting competition such as a swimming race is summative because it leads to a result or ranking that cannot be reneged. However, as there will always be future competitions, they could also be treated as summative – especially if it's not the ultimate competition in any given sport.
- Drivers License Test: A drivers license test is pass-fail, and represents the culmination of practice in driving skills.
- IELTS: Language tests like IELTS are summative assessments of a person's ability to speak a language (in the case of IELTS, it's English).
- Citizenship Test: Citizenship tests are pass-fail, and often high-stakes. There is no room for formative assessment here.
- Dissertation Submission: A final dissertation submission for a postgraduate degree is often sent to an external reviewer who will give it a pass-fail grade.
- CPR Course: Trainees in a 2-day first-aid and CPR course have to perform on a dummy while being observed by a licensed trainer.



- PISA Tests: The PISA test is a standardized test commissioned by the OECD to provide a final score of students' Mathematics, Science, and Reading Literacy across the world, which leads to a league table of nations.

## Summative Test Ideas For Classroom Teachers

Whereas the above exams represent some of the most high-profile and [high-stakes summative tests](#), summative assessment also takes place in everyday classrooms.

Below are some common ways teachers might create a summative test for their students:

- **A performance:** At the end of reading a history chapter on the Spanish-American War, students write a script and perform a play that highlight the key milestones and issues involved. The teacher provides a grade that will go on their final report card.
- **An infographic:** Students in a nutrition course are tasked with creating an infographic that details the issue of obesity in the United States.
- **A diagram:** After learning about ocean animals in a biology class, students construct Venn diagrams comparing and contrasting whales and fish.
- **A poster display:** After one week of lessons about pollution, third graders work in pairs and make a poster display about Arctic animals and the effects of pollution.
- **A slide deck demonstration:** Students in an architecture course have to choose 3 architectural styles and then make a slide deck that shows examples of each and explain the differences.
- **Observational testing:** Kindergarten kids have to demonstrate life skills by brushing their teeth, selecting the appropriate winter clothes, and tying their shoes independently.
- **Identifying errors in a program:** Computer science majors are given 5 pages of programming code for 5 different apps, and must find the one error in each.
- **Multiple choice exam:** Students in a European history course are given a cumulative multiple-choice exam at the end of the term over all 7 chapters covered.

## Summative Vs Formative Assessment



Summative assessments are one of two main types of assessment. The other is formative assessment.

Whereas summative assessment occurs at the end of a unit of work, a formative assessment takes place in the middle of the unit so teachers and students can get feedback on progress and make accommodations to stay on track.

Summative assessments tend to be much higher-stakes because they reflect a final judgment about a student's learning, skills, and knowledge:

*“Passing bestows important benefits, such as receiving a high school diploma, a scholarship, or entry into college, and failure can affect a child's future employment prospects and earning potential as an adult” (States et al, 2018, p. 3).*

## Five Summative Test Scenarios

### 1. Performance-Based Summative Assessment

A traditional form of summative assessment usually involves a lot of multiple-choice and short essay questions. But it doesn't have to be that way at all. Performance-based tests that involve authentic assessment can also be summative.

For example, at the end of each unit in an advanced radiology course, the instructor might provide students with 10 X-rays that show various diseases. The students have to work in pairs to identify the disease and indicate its stage of progression.

Of course, to make things interesting, the instructor also includes X-rays that don't contain any diseases and others that are most commonly misdiagnosed by highly experienced professionals.

### 2. Presentation-Based Final Evaluation



In a university course in developmental psychology, the chapter on attachment styles usually sparks a lot of interest among the students. Assessing student learning through traditional paper-and-pencil tests doesn't seem to capture the dynamic nature of the subject.

So, the professor locates some old footage from Mary Ainsworth's original studies on the [strange situations test](#). The videos are a bit grainy, but there is a lot of footage that show great examples of each attachment style.

To assess their understanding of each style, the students are sent home with a set of videos. They can watch them as often as they want but must return the next week and make a presentation to the class.

The presentation must involve showing the video, identifying the attachment style, and pinpointing the exact infant behavior that typifies that attachment category.

### 3. Portfolio Presentations

A university course for future kindergarten teachers is called Props and Stuff. The course involves teachers learning about prop theory and how to make their own materials for classroom instruction.

At the end of each unit, students have to make a specific type of prop, such as a sock puppet, pop-up book, or animal habitat diorama.

By the end of the term, students have produced a lot of very interesting props. As part of the summative assessment the class holds an exhibition where each student displays a selection of their props as part of their portfolio.

Each portfolio is evaluated by the other students (peer assessment) in the class based on a set of pre-determined criteria. The average of those scores will be the basis for their grade in the course.

### 4. Real-Life Simulation As Final Exam



Students in a course on leadership styles have spent the last 3 months reading chapters, writing papers, and debating case studies. They have memorized the names and dates of key historical scholars and can name plenty of modern leaders that fit certain styles.

However, the final assessment of their learning will be performance-based. The professor has prepared a set of job simulations that portray various scenarios in a corporate setting.

First, each student selects a card from the stack of simulation scenarios. Then they draw a slip of folded paper from a hat which identifies one leadership style.

While they engage the simulation, they must act according to the leadership style selected. The professor takes notes on their performance and keeps track of statements that reflect that style.

The final score is based on the number of times the student demonstrated the appropriate leadership style, either through statements or non-verbal behavior.

## 5. Interviews As Final Assessment

At the end of a history unit on the U.S. constitution, the teacher has decided to create a unique summative assessment that involves a simulated talk show interview.

Students will need to study the details of any 3 key historical figures involved in the writing of the constitution. They can choose from the list provided by the teacher.

The summative assessment will occur in the form of a talk show interview. One student will interview the historical figure by asking them questions about their life and their role in writing the constitution. There are 6 questions that are central to the unit's content.

Grades will be based on if the student knows key facts that were covered in the unit about that figure. The more complete and accurate their answers, the higher their score.

## Conclusion

Summative assessment allows teachers to determine if their students have reached the defined [behavioral objectives](#). It can occur at the end of a unit, an academic term, or academic year.



The assessment usually results in a grade or a percentage that is recorded in the student's file. These scores are then used in a variety of ways and are meant to provide a snapshot of the student's progress.

Although the SAT or ACT are common examples of summative assessment, it can actually take many forms. Teachers might ask their students to give an oral presentation, perform a short role-play, or complete a project-based assignment.

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