Alternative Forms Of English Language Assessment That Teachers Can Use Instead Of Tests

If you're looking for a course evaluation method that puts the student's knowledge to work, then you should try the alternative assessment methods. These methods of assessment are about getting students to show how much they have learned by executing tasks.

Unlike traditional evaluation methods that only assess the student's knowledge, alternative assessments spur the student to wear his or her thinking hat, and creatively apply the knowledge to solve a problem. Concept maps, portfolios, and open-tests are some familiar examples of alternative assessments.

What Are Alternative Assessments?

These are methods of evaluation that measure a student’s level of proficiency in a subject as opposed to the student’s level of knowledge. The overall goal of alternative assessments is to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and execute tasks.

Alternative assessments are also called performance tests or authentic assessments because they are deeply rooted in one’s ability to do something by leveraging newly-gained knowledge. As part of the assessment, the student will need to perform meaningful tasks that reflect a clear understanding of the teaching and learning objectives.

You can ask your students to create a portfolio, work with others on specific projects or engage in any other type of activity that shows they have a full grasp of what has been discussed in the class or training.

Characteristics of Alternative Assessments

To better understand what alternative assessments are, let’s first look at some of the things alternative assessments are not.

1. Alternative assessments are not high-stake or standardized methods of evaluating students’ knowledge.
2. They are not a replacement for other methods of classroom assessment like formative and summative assessment methods.
3. Alternative assessments do not measure the learner’s performance.
4. Results from alternative assessments are not presented as quantitative or numerical data.

Now you know what should not be expected from alternative assessments, it’s time to get familiar with the characteristics of alternative assessments.
1. Alternative assessments are tailored to the specific needs and abilities of individual students. You should not think of them as one-size-fits-all students.
2. They are an instructor-led assessment process. This means the teacher develops unique methods to measure the student’s ability.
3. Alternative assessment methods are flexible and continuously adaptable.
4. Alternative assessments or authentic assessments explore different learning styles and preferences in a bid to measure learners’ abilities.
5. Alternative assessment methods are seamlessly aligned with the learning goals and objectives of the course, class, or training.

Advantages of Alternative Assessments

1. They give the students an opportunity to apply their knowledge to real-life situations and to solve practical problems.
2. Alternative assessments are effective methods of evaluating students' problem-solving skills.
3. They are cost-effective methods of assessing learners' knowledge within the training context.
4. Alternative assessment methods are simple and straightforward.
5. They make the teaching and learning processes more effective because teachers can identify and support students who need more guidance easily.
6. Alternative assessments encourage learners to step out of their comfort zones and think outside the box. Students learn to think, analyze, and apply their knowledge to create solutions to different problems.
7. They are fair and transparent process of determining student proficiency levels.
8. Alternative assessments are effective methods of building learners' logical reasoning and communication skills.
9. They eliminate the unreliable evaluation process that is typically associated with traditional methods of assessment like tests and examination.

Disadvantages of Alternative Assessment

1. The results of alternative assessments can be largely affected by the teacher's bias or preferences.
2. They are time-consuming assessment methods because the teacher has to pay specific attention to every student in order to provide an almost-precise evaluation of the student's ability.
3. Alternative assessment methods can be difficult to develop and grade.
4. It is difficult to collate and interpret results from alternative assessments. This is because the results are mostly qualitative.
5. In situations where the teacher isn't familiar with alternative assessments, it becomes expensive for the school to train teachers on alternative assessment methods and set up test preparations.
8 Alternatives To Tests To Use In EFL Classes For English Language Assessment

What methods of alternative assessment should you try out in class? There are a number of choices you can explore however, your final decision should be in line with the unique learning needs of every student and your teaching goals. Here, we will discuss 8 examples of alternative assessments.

1. **Portfolio**

   You can ask students to build out a portfolio that demonstrates their knowledge of what has been taught in a class or training. A portfolio is a collection of the different tasks a student has executed in the course of the class or training.

   If you're handling learners in beginner classes, you can ask them to create a paper portfolio using a notebook; for advanced learners, an online portfolio is the best bet.

2. **Performance Test**

   Since alternative assessments are all about putting knowledge to work, design effective performance tests to help you rate a student's level of skill or knowledge.

   A performance test requires the learners to execute complex tasks while the instructor observes how they go about them.

   As an instructor, you should have well-defined scoring criteria to effectively measure each student's ability and arrive at a valid conclusion.

3. **Open Tests**

   An open test is a method of assessment that allows learners to refer to course materials as they take on tasks or write tests and examinations.

   The questions in an open test require the student to provide responses that show how well they understand the course.

   Instead of memorizing the content of the training guide or course materials, the student has to apply the knowledge in the material(s) to provide the best response to the stated questions.
4. **Take-Home Assessment**

Another way to assess your students' abilities is to give them take-home exercises. Take-home exercises typically check 2 boxes. Firstly, they require multiple references, and secondly, there isn't enough time for learners to do them in class.

With take-home exercises, you really cannot tell if the student received some help from their guardian(s) but you can ask the students to work with materials that are strictly relevant to the course or training.

5. **Collaborative Testing**

This happens when you put the students in groups and get them to work together on different tasks. Ideally, you should pair them or place the students in small groups of 3 or 4, to get the best results from this exercise.

As the name suggests, collaborative testing empowers the students to brainstorm together, solve challenges, and execute ideas.

At the end of each brainstorming session, you can ask your students to make individual submissions or submit collective responses as a group.

6. **Summaries**

Instead of making students go through tests and assignments, you can ask them to summarize class readings, lectures, and discussions. A good summary tells you one thing – the student has an impressive understanding of key concepts and ideas from the classroom.

Aside from helping you track a student’s knowledge in real-time, summary writing also does the magic for knowledge retention. Summary writing is a powerful way to improve learning and memory in the classroom.

7. **Reports**

Reports work just like summaries; they require the student to show how well they understand key concepts from class discussions. However, reports take things a step further as the student needs to communicate his or her knowledge in a way that presents a clear picture to whoever reads the report; even if such a person wasn’t part of the class.
8. **Interviews**

Pair students and ask them to perform interviews about different subject matters discussed in your class.

For instance, if you had a class discussion on a historical event, one student can role-play as a key event player while the other person becomes the interviewer; asking questions about that event.

**Conclusion**

In this article, we have discussed 8 examples of alternative assessments plus how you can recreate them in your classroom during a course.

Interestingly, some of these examples can boost parents' involvement in their wards' learning process. For instance, parents can help out with take-home assignments.

Alternative assessments can be a type of formative assessment because they evaluate the learners' progress as the course goes underway.