

## Key Differences Between Typical Tests and Authentic Tasks

Grant P. Wiggins (1998)

<i>Typical Tests</i>	<i>Authentic Tasks</i>	<i>Indicators of Authenticity</i>
Require correct responses only	Require quality product and/or performance, and justification	We assess whether the student can explain, apply, self-adjust, or justify answers, not just the correctness of answers, using facts and algorithms
Must be unknown in advance to ensure validity	Are known as much as possible in advance; involve excelling at predictable, demanding and core tasks; are not “gotcha!” experiences.	The tasks, criteria, and standards by which work will be judged are predictable or known—like the recital piece, the play, engine to be fixed, proposal to a client, etc.
Are disconnected from a realistic context and realistic constraints	Require real-world use of knowledge: the student must “do” history, science, etc. in realistic simulations or actual use.	The task is a challenge and a set of constraints that are authentic—likely to be encountered by the professional, citizen or consumer. (Know-how, not plugging in, is required.)
Contain isolated items requiring use of recognition of known answers or skills	Are integrated challenges in which knowledge and judgment must be innovatively used to fashion a quality product or performance.	The task is multifaceted and non-routine, even if there is a “right” answer. It thus requires problem clarification, trial and error, adjustments, adapting to the case or facts at hand, etc.
Are simplified so as to be easy to score reliably	Involve complex and non-arbitrary tasks, criteria, and standards.	The task involves the important aspects of performance and/or core challenges of the field of study, not easily scored; does not sacrifice validity for reliability.

<i>Typical Tests</i>	<i>Authentic Tasks</i>	<i>Indicators of Authenticity</i>
Depend on highly technical correlations	Provide direct evidence, involving tasks that have been validated against core adult roles and discipline-based challenges.	The task is valid and fair on its face. It thus evokes student interest and persistence, and seems apt and challenging to students and teachers.
Provide a score	Provide usable, diagnostic (sometimes concurrent) feedback: the student is able to confirm results and self-adjust as needed.	The assessment is designed not merely to audit performance but to improve future performance. The student is seen as the primary “customer” of information.

**Wiggins, G. P.** (1998). “Ensuring Authentic Performance.” *Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance*. San Francisco, California. Jossey-Bass.