Affective Assessment
Items and Techniques

Among the items and techniques that are well suited for assessing affective achievement are essay items, case studies or problem-solving items, structured or unstructured interviews, oral examinations, attitude scales, and checklists.

An essay item can be constructed so that it requires a learner to describe feelings or beliefs or commitment toward something. If an objective is that learners will become committed to action (valuing level) regarding the advantages of obtaining a technical education, an essay item may be appropriate, provided it requires learners to respond beyond the knowledge level -- beyond simply knowing the advantages. An example of such an essay item follows:

A month ago, we studied the advantages of enrolling in a career and technical education program after completing this course. What steps, if any, have you taken toward enrolling in or applying for admission to a post-secondary technical school?

If a learner can’t describe a single action taken (e.g., talked with my parents, wrote for admissions information, am earning money), you can infer that he or she has not gone beyond the receiving or awareness level.

A case study or problem-solving item can also be used to evaluate achievement of affective objectives. Let’s say that one objective involves sharing the responsibility of keeping the laboratory clean. This objective could be stated at an affective level by requiring learners to respond positively to -- and perhaps even to value -- a clean, orderly, and safe laboratory. You, as the instructor, want some assurance that the learners are committed to the objective before they actually participate in laboratory activities. You could give learners the following problem-solving item:

You are using a blowtorch in the welding area of the shop. You look up and see that class will end in five minutes. What are you going to do during the last five minutes?

If the learner mentions only turning off the blowtorch and picking up his/her books for the next class, you could question whether he/she values a clean, orderly, and safe laboratory.

Another assessment technique for obtaining insights into a learner’s achievement in the affective domain is the structured interview. The structured interview is
held on a one-to-one basis in private. It is carefully organized to be sure that the learner has an opportunity to express his/her attitudes and feelings on predetermined questions.

For example, if you and your learners decide that an objective they want to achieve is to contribute to the community, then a structured interview may be appropriate. The structured interview would be conducted with one learner at a time and could be recorded. (Some teachers use a tape recorder for this purpose.)

In preparation for the interview, you would need to construct a set of questions or problems to which you want the learners to respond. The following are some of the items that might appear on your question sheet for the structured interview for the previous affective objective:

- Did you contribute any of your time, money, and talents for a community project?
- Did you help any of your neighbors?
- Did you use any of your work skills to help someone in need? Did you charge for your services?

The unstructured interview is another technique that can be used to evaluate achievement of affective objectives. In effect, this is simply a conversation between you and the learner in which you bring up the topics that you want the learner to talk about. This technique could also be used to evaluate the previous objective. You would not have a written list of questions to follow during the interview, but you could still record the interview.

In an unstructured interview, you want the learner to know the purpose of the interview, and you assist the learner in expressing his/her feelings. If a learner is unable to express his/her feelings during this type of interview, you may want to try another type of evaluation technique.

An oral examination could be used to evaluate learner achievement of affective objectives within the classroom or laboratory setting. You need to be very careful, however, in your choice of questions because expressions of feelings can become uncontrollable. If you have an affective objective in which learners learn to evaluate on-the-job progress, an oral examination would be an effective means of judging learner achievement, providing the learners have been on the job long enough to realize their progress.

Many teachers ask questions during their teaching, but this use of questioning is not an oral examination. Rather, it is a teaching assessment that helps you decide if the learners are picking up your teaching points . . . as you teach. When an oral examination is used for evaluation purposes, you should write out the questions beforehand and record, in writing or on tape, the responses made by learners.
There are many types of **attitude scales** that can be developed to assess learner achievement of affective performance objectives. One type is a **rating scale** in which learners are asked to rate how strongly they feel about a statement, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. If you are trying to teach the concept that the customer is always right, for example, you may want to construct an attitude scale such as that in **Sample 1**.

**SAMPLE 1. RATING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I’d smile even though I didn’t like what a customer said to me</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’d tell a customer he or she was wrong even though I might not make a sale</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another form of attitude scale that could be used to assess achievement of learner affective objectives is called a semantic differential scale. learners are asked to rate, according to their feelings, two opposing words or ideas. If a learner objective is to appreciate the value of listening to the livestock market report, then a scale such as that shown in **Sample 2** could be used.

**SAMPLE 2. SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worthwhile</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Useless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A checklist for recording observations of learners while at school and on the job is an excellent evaluation technique for assessing learner affective performance. You may need to locate or develop several checklists, because each checklist should focus upon a specific objective. If one of the objectives is for learners to value being on time, then the use of a checklist such as that shown in sample 3 could assist you in assessing the learner’s performance.

The approach and techniques you use will depend largely upon the particular objectives and behavior you wish to evaluate. You may want to give an attitudinal pretest. You may want to plan to use more than one type of evaluation device for each objective. Or you may decide to use the same attitudinal checklist at various times throughout the year. For example, assume that an instructor is interested in how learners' attitudes toward being
typists changed between the beginning and the end of a typing course. She or he would probably use a specially designed attitudinal test on a pretest and post-test basis.

SAMPLE 3. SEMANTIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors for week of ________________</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In seat when bell rings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Has materials needed for class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In another situation, you might want to assess learners' progress toward acquiring positive work habits while they are employed in a cooperative education work setting. In this instance, you could (1) develop an attitudinal checklist covering such items as employer-employee relations, punctuality, grooming, and dress and (2) ask the on-the-job instructors to rate the learners periodically using this checklist.

Many affective objectives can be assessed through more informal means, such as observation of work habits, analysis of comments made by the learners, and so on. The main point to remember is that you should select the most appropriate technique to assess achievement of the particular objective.