

Ebel's Method

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Using Ebel's method, each item is rated according to two standards: **difficulty** and **importance**.

The **difficulty** of an item is characterized as **easy**, **medium**, or **difficult**, while the **importance** is characterized as **acceptable**, **important**, or **essential**. After the panel of subject matter experts agrees on the definition of a minimally competent candidate, a determination is made as to the percentage of items in each of the nine categories such a candidate would answer correctly. This percentage is multiplied in each of the nine categories by the number of items it contains. The passing score is set by averaging the category scores.

Here is a type of grid used when applying Ebel's Method.

	Easy	Medium	Hard
Essential			
Important			
Acceptable			

Here is a populated table that shows the percentage of items in each of the nine categories a borderline candidate would answer correctly:

	Easy	Medium	Hard
Essential	95%	80%	70%
Important	90%	80%	75%
Acceptable	80%	60%	50%

Here is an illustration of how the percentage is multiplied in each of the 9 categories by the number of items it contains:

<u>Category</u>	<u>% Right</u>	<u># Questions</u>	<u>Score</u>
Essential			
Easy	95	3	2.85
Hard	80	2	1.60
Important			
Easy	90	3	2.70
Hard	75	4	3.00
Acceptable			
Easy	80	2	1.60
Hard	50	<u>3</u>	<u>1.50</u>
		17	12.25

Modified Ebel's Method

A modified Ebel's method is also available.

A simplified version of the Ebel method asks subject matter experts to rate items only according to importance, categorizing them as **essential**, **important**, or **indicated**. After defining a minimally competent candidate, SMEs then assess how many items in each category such a candidate should be expected to answer correctly. The passing score is established by averaged the ratings across the three categories.

How does the Modified Ebel's method differ from the traditional Ebel's method?

- Judges only rate items according to importance, not difficulty
- SMEs assess how many items in each category such a candidate should be expected to answer correctly
- The passing score is established by averaged the ratings across the three categories