

RTD Content Validity Checklist

By: Marjorie Wine
Alexander Hoffman

The RTD (Rigorous Test Development) project is an attempt to build a professionalized content development practice that focuses on individual item quality, particularly by leaning into the importance of validity throughout the content development process. It assumes that content development professionals develop professional judgment that can be raised, honed and calibrated by providing frameworks and clarifying expectations in ways that account for the constraints and demands of typical practice within test development, today. RTD is a conscious and deliberate attempt to respond to the disparity in status, training and shared knowledgebases between psychometrically oriented professionals and content development professionals.



RTD Content Validity Checklist (MC Format)

These steps should be taken generally in this order, but the order need not be followed exactly.

- Are there content errors in the Item?
- Does each Answer Option include what the plain language of the Stem asks for? (e.g. if the Stem asks for a hypothesis, are all the Answer Options in the form of hypotheses?)
- Are the Answer Options necessary for the test taker to understand the meaning of the Stem?
 - Does the Key correspond to the answer a knowledgeable test taker would give if not supplied with the Answer Options.
 - Must the test taker have to engage in process of elimination in order to determine the Key?
 - If so, is that necessary for the Indicator?
- Is the Stimulus – if present – necessary to answer the Item?
- Is the Key correct?
- Is each of the Distractors incorrect?
- Does the Item align with the Indicator/Assessment Target?
 - Does the Item generate evidence as to whether the test taker has mastered the indicated skill? (i.e., does the test taker need to demonstrate some level of mastery of the indicator in order to differentiate the Key from the Distractors?)
 - Does the item require test taker need to demonstrate some level of mastery of other Indicators/Assessment Targets in order to differentiate the Key from the Distractors?
- Does the Item align to the all other requirements or claims associated with the item?
- Is each Distractor plausible but incorrect? (i.e. does each Distractor represent a specific misunderstanding of the Indicator, the Stimulus and/or the Content Sub-Topic?)
- Do the Rationales explain why the Key is correct and the Distractors are both plausible and incorrect in terms of the Indicator and/or the Sub-topic?
- Do the Rationales reveal that the test taker needs knowledge or understanding that is *not* included in the Stimulus and Stem in order to identify the Key?
 - Do the Rationales reveal an interpretation of the Stem that is not necessarily clear from the language of the Stem itself?
 - Do the Rationales reveal that that the test taker needs additional understanding of the topic or situation that is not included in the Stimulus or Stem?
- What is/are the thought process(es) that test takers will have to go through to get from the Stimulus and Stem to the Key?* (Note: This is not the same thing as why the Key is correct or how you know what the correct answer is. This is the specific thought process that you expect *typical test takers* to follow to get through the Item.)
- Is the Item at the same level of cognitive complexity (e.g., DOK) for all significant groups of test-takers & is its cognitive complexity recorded correct?

