

Adapted from *Classroom assessment techniques: a handbook for college teachers*, Angelo & Cross, 1993

Defining Features Matrix

What it is -

A method of assessment wherein students indicate whether categories contain (+) or lack (-) certain features.

How you would use it -

It can be used to ascertain whether or not students understand the distinction between two or three categories of information which they have been presented.

Example -

	Popular magazine (ex. New Scientist)	vs. Scholarly journal (ex. Nature)
1. peer reviewed	-	+
2. written by the researchers	-	+
3. can be cited as primary evidence	-	+
4. understandable to a non-scientist	+	-

Advantages of using the Defining Features Matrix -

Easy for the students to use.

Easy for the instructor to grade.

Disadvantages of using the Defining Features Matrix –

Instructor must carefully think each feature to make sure that it is entirely true for one category and entirely false for the other. For example, in the above matrix “understandable to a non-scientist” may or may not be true, and therefore is not a good feature.