

Assessment Design Tool: Designing Evidence-Centered Assessment Items

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This assessment design tool helps South Carolina U.S. History teachers design, evaluate, or adapt evidence-centered assessment items that align with the South Carolina U.S. History and the Constitution standards. Using a structured planning process, educators identify the historical thinking required by an indicator, determine the intended Depth of Knowledge (DOK), apply the Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs), and design assessment items that reflect the rigor and reasoning expected on the EOCEP while supporting high-quality classroom instruction. Use this planning process to ensure that every assessment item intentionally measures the historical thinking, content, and level of reasoning required by the standard.

Planning Process:

1. Select a U.S. History Indicator.

Select one indicator from the South Carolina U.S. History and the Constitution standards.

Use the South Carolina U.S. History Alignment Guide to identify:

- the embedded Historical Thinking Skill
- the intended DOK
- the essential content students should understand

2. Design, Select, or Adapt Three Evidence-Centered Assessment Items

Create original assessment items, adapt existing items, or select high-quality assessment items from a trusted source. Revise them as needed to ensure alignment with the intended historical thinking, DOK, and PLDs.

- A mix of item types (SR, MS, EBSR, TECR)
- At least one technology-enhanced or evidence-based reasoning item

3. Align Each Assessment Item

For each item, identify:

- USHC Indicator
- Historical Thinking Skill (e.g., CX, CE, P)
- DOK Level

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- Item Type
- Targeted PLD Level (Minimally Meets, Meets, Exceeds)
- Content Focus (specific concept or development assessed)
- Rationale for Alignment (1–2 sentences explaining why the item measures the intended historical thinking and cognitive demand.)

4. Use the Assessment Alignment Checklist

Review each assessment item using the Assessment Alignment Checklist. Revise items as needed to strengthen alignment among the standard, historical thinking, DOK, PLDs, and assessment evidence.

Make revisions as needed and note any changes you made to strengthen alignment.

Planning Reminder

Effective assessment begins with the historical thinking required by the standard. Use the Assessment Alignment Checklist to ensure every assessment item intentionally aligns historical thinking, content, DOK, PLDs, and assessment evidence.

Reflection

After completing this assessment design tool, reflect individually or with a professional learning community on how your assessment design decisions support coherent, evidence-centered instruction.

- Which assessment item most effectively measured the intended historical thinking, and why?
- How did the DOK influence your design decisions?
- How did the PLDs help you differentiate expectations?
- What revisions would strengthen the alignment between the standard, instruction, and assessment?