

Case 2: Does the worksheet show what Dec knows?

Dec can explain a circuit out loud but gets lost on a crowded worksheet, so the crew asks what the task measures.

On your own Read What happened. Underline what Dec can do out loud and where he gets stuck. About 5 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who reads the goal line before anyone decides what Dec knows. **New skill:** Check what a task is meant to measure.



Dec points to a small light circuit on the table while Anika watches.

What happened

Anika, 16, and Dec, 17, are at the study table twenty minutes before theater rehearsal. They are building a light circuit for a school set. Dec can explain out loud how the current travels through the circuit. On the written practice sheet, he loses his place in the instructions.

The sheet has six dense paragraphs and one small diagram. Anika's first idea is to run the same timed practice sheet again. Then she draws a larger sketch, and Dec traces the whole circuit correctly.

Mari, 19, is on her break from the bookshop. She does not assume she knows why Dec is stuck. Dec wants help with this task, but he does not want a diagnosis from the group chat.

Your question: Does the practice sheet show what Dec knows, and what should Dec ask his teacher?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 6 minutes.

Learning goal A learning goal is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show.

En español: meta de aprendizaje

In this case: The practice brief names one goal: explain how a simple circuit works. It does not list speed or reading six dense paragraphs.

Evaluation An evaluation is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure.

En español: evaluación

In this case: Dec's practice sheet is not an evaluation. It is one observation the crew can describe to a teacher.

Eligibility Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program.

En español: elegibilidad

In this case: A practice sheet cannot show whether Dec is eligible for special education. Under IDEA, no single measure can be the only basis for that decision.

Who is involved



Dec

Theater crew, working on the circuit sheet

"I can show you where the current goes. Then I get halfway through the written question and lose my place."



Anika

Studying the circuit with Dec

"I kept pointing at the page and saying 'it's right there.' I never looked at how the question was written."

Before you look at the evidence, why do you think Dec gets stuck on the worksheet?

[illegible]

Reading passage

One score, two explanations

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Learning goal:** A learning goal is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show.
- **Evaluation:** An evaluation is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure.
- **Eligibility:** Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program.
- **Context:** Context is the information around an event or a quote that you need to understand what it means.

The story: What the study table shows

Twenty minutes before rehearsal, the study table looks like a small workshop. Anika, a high school junior who helps build theater sets, and Dec, a senior who pulls the curtain at every show, are wiring a light circuit for a school set. Dec can narrate the path of the current without hesitating: out of the battery, through the switch and the LED, and back. The written practice sheet stops him. It asks students to read six dense paragraphs, use one small diagram and answer four questions in complete sentences. Partway through, Dec loses track of which line the question wants him to follow.

Each friend responds according to habit. Anika, who likes to solve a problem herself, suggests running the timed sheet again. Later she notices her own mistake. She kept pointing at the answer instead of at how the question was built. When she redraws the circuit at a larger size, Dec traces it correctly from start to finish. Mari, who is dyslexic and moves between print and audiobooks, does not claim to know what is happening for Dec. She asks him to explain it to her first, then compare that with the worksheet.

Dec sets the terms. He wants help with this assignment, and he wants his friends to describe what happened rather than announce what is wrong with him. Your role is to read the goal line before anyone decides what Dec knows.

? **Stop and think.** Anika wants to avoid doing the thinking for Dec. How can a clearer format still test the learning goal?

Measuring the goal, not the format

Case 1 taught a habit that transfers directly: go back to the original source. Here that source is the practice brief. Its goal is to “explain how a simple circuit works.” It sets no time limit. A **learning goal** is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show, and naming it changes the question. The issue is no longer whether Dec can finish the sheet. It is whether the sheet measures the goal or something next to it, such as reading dense text under pressure.

The evidence is uneven, and that is useful. The study-table notes record two observations on the same afternoon. Spoken, with a larger sketch, Dec’s explanation was correct. Written, he skipped a line and answered a different question. Neither observation explains why. Case 1’s term **context** applies here. A written answer is real evidence, but like a cropped clip it shows one frame of a larger picture.

Anika’s revised plan is modest. She wants one clear diagram and one instruction at a time, followed by Dec explaining why the circuit works. She does not want to do the thinking for him. That last condition matters. A new format is only a fair test if it still requires Dec to show the learning goal.

 **Stop and think.** The notes record what happened but not why. Why is it important to keep those two things separate?

The limits of a study session

Schools have a formal process for questions the crew cannot answer. An **evaluation** is a school’s formal process for learning about a student’s needs, using more than one measure. **Eligibility** is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program. The federal IDEA regulations require a public school to use a variety of assessment tools and forbid using any single measure as the sole basis for an eligibility decision (U.S. Department of Education, IDEA regulations, 34 CFR 300.304). As the law turned fifty, K-12 Dive traced where IDEA, evaluations and individualized education programs came from (K-12 Dive, December 3, 2025).

The same logic appears in design and in civil rights guidance. CAST’s guidelines encourage giving learners more than one way to take in information and show what they know (CAST, Universal Design for Learning Guidelines 3.0, 2024). A systematic review and meta-analysis examined how well that approach works in practice (Almeqdad et al., Cogent Education, May 29, 2023). The Department of Justice says testing accommodations should let a test measure skill rather than disability (ADA.gov, February 28, 2020).

Professional ethics adds a privacy boundary. The NEA code says educators “shall not disclose information about students obtained in the course of professional service” without a compelling professional purpose or a legal requirement (National Education Association, Code of Ethics, 1975). Friends are not bound by that code, but the crew follows its spirit. Dec decides what Ms. R hears, and a study session stays a study session.

The limits of a study session, continued

The skill you practiced here, checking what a task is meant to measure, returns in later cases. You will ask it of a pay statement, a sample ballot and a school budget.

 **Stop and think.** IDEA forbids using a single measure as the only basis for eligibility. What risk is that rule designed to prevent?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Department of Education | No date listed
IDEA regulations, 34 CFR § 300.304 (evaluation procedures)

Real source | K-12 Dive | December 3, 2025
IDEA at 50: How the landmark law changed education

Real source | CAST | 2024
Universal Design for Learning Guidelines 3.0

Real source | Cogent Education (Almeqdad et al.) | May 29, 2023
The effectiveness of universal design for learning: A systematic review of the literature and meta-analysis

Real source | ADA.gov (U.S. Department of Justice) | February 28, 2020
ADA Requirements: Testing Accommodations

Real source | National Education Association (NEA) | 1975
Code of Ethics of the Education Profession

Notes

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 minutes.

Evidence A | Practice brief, handed out Monday

The assignment

Goal: Explain how a simple circuit works. Read the six paragraphs below before you answer. Use the diagram to trace the path of the current from the battery through the switch and the LED and back. Answer questions 1–4 in complete sentences.

Look closely: Which skill does the goal line name, and which does it leave out?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Study-table notes, Wednesday 3:40 p.m.

Dec's explanation

Out loud, with the larger sketch: traced the whole path, battery to switch to LED and back. Correct. Written sheet: skipped a line in the instructions and answered a different question from the one asked. Dec: the layout is hard to follow.

Look closely: What did Dec get right out loud that the sheet did not record?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Key idea: learning goals

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 12 minutes.

Dec's written answer and his spoken explanation give the crew different information. A **learning goal** is the knowledge or skill that a task is meant to show. The practice brief names one goal: explain how a simple circuit works. It does not list speed, and it does not list reading six dense paragraphs. So the next question is what the sheet was meant to measure and what got in the way.

CAST's Universal Design for Learning Guidelines encourage giving learners more than one way to take in information and show what they know. For Dec, a larger diagram is a practice option to test. It is not a diagnosis, and it does not change an official test. Ask Dec what helped, and check that he can still explain the circuit.

An **evaluation** is a school's formal process for learning about a student's needs, using more than one measure. Under IDEA, a federal law, a public school must use varied tools in an evaluation. No single measure can be the only basis for deciding **eligibility**. Eligibility is meeting the requirements for a particular service or program. A study session is not an evaluation, so Dec decides whether to ask his school how that process starts.

Professional standards

Real source | Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

CEC Ethical Principles and Practice Standards: Special Education Standards for Professional Practice: Teaching and Assessment

“Use culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment procedures that accurately measure what is intended to be measured”

In plain words: Special educators who follow CEC's standards use assessments that measure the skill the task is meant to measure.

Question: The goal is explaining a circuit. Which parts of the sheet test something else, like reading six dense paragraphs?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

Besides its goal, the sheet measures ____, which means ____.

In the news



Real source | Education Week | October 13, 2025

Does Extended Time on Tests Actually Help Students With ADHD?

Asks the case’s question in real life: does a test accommodation help students show what they actually know?



Real source | K-12 Dive | December 3, 2025

IDEA at 50: How the landmark law changed education

Explains where IDEA, evaluations and IEPs came from and why schools must plan around each student’s needs.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Read each decision in the diagram. Write who decides it in each blank box. About 8 minutes.

Sort who can decide each question. Which decision belongs to the teacher, which to a formal school process, and which only to Dec?

Try a clearer practice format for the circuit goal

Who decides

The teacher, who sets the practice format and the learning goal

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Dec, who decides what to share and whether to ask

Your way in

Start a formal IDEA evaluation or a Section 504 conversation

Who decides

The school's evaluation process, with a parent or guardian for a student under 18

Under which rule

IDEA evaluation rule: varied tools, no single measure as the sole basis

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

[illegible]

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what the crew should try and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines. About 6 minutes.

What should the crew try at the study table?

- ☐ **A** Run the same timed sheet again so Dec gets more practice.
- ☐ **B** Let Dec explain with a larger diagram, then compare his reasoning with the sheet.
- ☐ **C** Tell Dec he probably needs an IEP.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Hi Ms. R, Dec failed the circuit sheet again and we think the test is unfair to him. He obviously knows the material because he explained it to us perfectly. At the study table he went through the whole thing out loud with no mistakes. ① We think he might have a learning disability and should get an IEP so he can get extra time. My cousin has one and it helped her a lot. ② Can you give him an easier version? We really think this would help him pass. Thanks, Anika and Mari.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

Grades 11–12

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write an explainer for students on the path from a classroom struggle to an IDEA evaluation, a 504 plan or neither.

Use: The IDEA excerpt (34 CFR § 300.304), the IEP contents rule (§ 300.320) and the case evidence.

You'll make: Illustrated explainer, 300–400 words

Time: 60 minutes

- 1 Reread the key idea. List the terms evaluation, eligibility, IEP and Section 504.
- 2 Fill in the flowchart from a classroom struggle to an evaluation, a 504 plan or neither.
- 3 Mark each step that a district may handle in its own way.
- 4 Write one sentence that uses Dec's case as an example without deciding anything about him.
- 5 Draft the opening and the flowchart captions on the Your draft page.
- 6 Finish the explainer, 300 to 400 words, in the online workspace.
- 7 Check your explainer with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Step 1: in the classroom

Step 2: asking about support

Step 3: a formal evaluation

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 22 minutes.

Your explainer’s opening

Captions for your flowchart

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your explainer separate evaluation, eligibility and a plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it describe Section 504 as a separate route?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it use Dec's case without concluding anything about him?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it name who at school to ask?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Mentions only the score.	☐ Describes Dec's explanation vaguely.	☐ Cites the goal and two specific observations.	☐ Uses observations and notes what they cannot show.
Reasoning	☐ Concludes Dec has a disability or the test is illegal.	☐ Suggests easier content without linking to the goal.	☐ Connects a possible format barrier to the learning goal.	☐ Distinguishes classroom support from IDEA evaluation accurately.
Audience & purpose	☐ Message speaks for Dec without his input.	☐ Mentions Dec but ignores his voice.	☐ Written in Dec's voice with his permission.	☐ Respects Dec's control and gives the teacher a clear next step.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Removes one problem line.	☐ Replaces the diagnosis with an observation.	☐ Explains how each change protects Dec's privacy and agency.

I changed ___ because ____.

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Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

1 Is the practice sheet checking circuit understanding, reading speed or both?

2 How would you know a new format shows Dec's learning more clearly instead of giving away the answer?

3 What does the IDEA evaluation rule cover, and why does a study session fall outside it?

My take

My claim: ____.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

[illegible]

Talk about this case at home

Case 2: Does the worksheet show what Dec knows?

In this case, a student can explain a light circuit out loud but gets lost on a crowded worksheet. Your student compared the worksheet's goal with notes from a study session and thought about what the worksheet really measures.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Can one test show everything a person knows? Why or why not?
- 2 What makes the directions on a worksheet or a form easy to follow?
- 3 Who at a school can students ask about help with schoolwork?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.