

Designing assessment tasks: With or without context

Contemplating the following statements might help you to clarify your own beliefs about the value of contexts in assessment tasks.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with each statement?

Context help students to make sense of a task. It helps with comprehension of the mathematics if the task is 'about something'.	Contexts are often confusing for students. If the context is not familiar enough to them it only complicates the task.
Contexts often imply a way to model the fractions in a task, or a particular strategy to use. This increases 'accessibility' for students, particularly those who are less confident.	Contexts often imply a way to model the fractions in a task, or a particular strategy to use. This limits the 'accessibility' for students who have a different preferred method for working with the fraction.
Tasks presented without any context are too abstract for some students to comprehend. Other students may simply respond with a learned procedure rather than really thinking about what it means or how it works.	Tasks presented without any context can properly assess the mathematics in a general sense, rather than only assess the student's ability to do the mathematics in one specific situation.