

Formative v.s. Summative Evaluation

Formative Evaluation	Summative Evaluation
<p>Formative Evaluation is a bit more complex than summative evaluation. It is done with a small group of people to "test run" various aspects of instructional materials. For example, you might ask a friend to look over your web pages to see if they are graphically pleasing, if there are errors you've missed, if it has navigational problems. It's like having someone look over your shoulder during the development phase to help you catch things that you miss, but a fresh set of eye might not. At times, you might need to have this help from a target audience. For example, if you're designing learning materials for third graders, you should have a third grader as part of your Formative Evaluation.</p> <p>Here are some different author's definitions of Formative Evaluation that will help you understand the difference.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Scriven, (1991)</p> <p>Formative evaluation is typically conducted during the development or improvement of a program or product (or person, and so on) and it is conducted, often more than once, for in-house staff of the program with the intent to improve. The reports normally remain in-house; but serious formative evaluation may be done by an internal or an external evaluator or preferably, a combination; of course, many program staff are, in an informal sense, constantly doing formative evaluation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Weston, Mc Alpine, and Bordonaro, (1995)</p> <p>The purpose of formative evaluation is to validate or ensure that the goals of the instruction are being achieved and to improve the instruction, if necessary, by means of identification and subsequent remediation of problematic aspects.</p>	<p>Summative evaluation provides information on the product's efficacy (its ability to do what it was designed to do). For example, did the learners learn what they were supposed to learn after using the instructional module. In a sense, it lets the learner know "how they did," but more importantly, by looking at how the learner's did, it helps you know whether the product teaches what it is supposed to teach.</p> <p>Summative evaluation is typically quantitative, using numeric scores or letter grades to assess learner achievement.</p> <p>So what is the difference between a Summative Evaluation and Learner Assessment?</p> <p>Although both might look at the same data, a Learner Assessment generally looks at how an individual learner performed on a learning task. It assesses a student's learning -- hence the name Learner Assessment. For example, you might assess an entire class of students, but you are assess them individually to see how each did.</p> <p>A Summative Evaluation, on the other hand, looks at more than one learner's performance to see how well a group did on a learning task that utilized specific learning materials and methods. By looking at the group, the instructional designer can evaluate the learning materials and learning process -- hence the name Summative Evaluation. For example, here you may find that, as a group, all of the students did well on Section A of some instructional materials, but didn't do so well on Section B. That would indicate that the designer should go back and look at the design or delivery of Section B.</p>

Worthen, Sanders, and Fitzpatrick, (1997)

Formative evaluation is conducted to provide program staff evaluative information useful in improving the program.

Robert Stakes

"When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative;
when the guests taste the soup, that's summative."

Scriven, (1996)

- "is research-oriented vs. action-oriented"
- "evaluations are intended - by the evaluator - as a basis for improvement"
- "the summative vs. formative distinction is context dependent"