

# Mathematical Competence: Framework and Exemplary Test Items

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## Mathematical Competence: Framework and Exemplary Test Items

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In the NEPS, mathematical competence describes the ability to flexibly use and apply mathematics in realistic situations. Of course, this requires mathematical skills and mathematical knowledge.

A detailed description of the framework can be found in Neumann et al. (2012) and Ehmke et al. (2009). It mainly distinguishes two dimensions to structure mathematical processes: content areas and cognitive components, cf. figure 1. When composing the test instruments, the four content areas are included in approximately equal shares. The six cognitive components are distributed over the items.

The content areas are:

- **Quantity** relates to all kinds of quantification, that is to say the usage of numbers for describing and solving situations.
- **Change & Relationships** relates to all kinds of relational and functional relationships between mathematical objects.
- Shape & Space relates to all kinds of level/coplanar and solid configurations, objects and patterns.
- **Data & Chance** relates to all kinds of phenomena and situations that contain statistic data or some kind of chance.

The following cognitive components are considered:

- **Arguing** includes assessing explanations and proofs, but also developing own explanations or proofs.
- **Communicating** requires communication on mathematical contents and includes, among other things, the correct and adequate use of mathematical technical terms.
- **Modelling** includes the representation in a situation model and in a mathematical model as well as interpreting and validating results in real-life situations.
- **Problem Solving** takes place, when there is no obvious approach, and, therefore, includes systematic trying, generalizing or examining special cases.
- **Representing** comprises the use and interpretation of mathematical representations such as tables, charts or graphs.
- Applying technical skills includes using known algorithms and remembering mathematical knowledge or calculation methods.

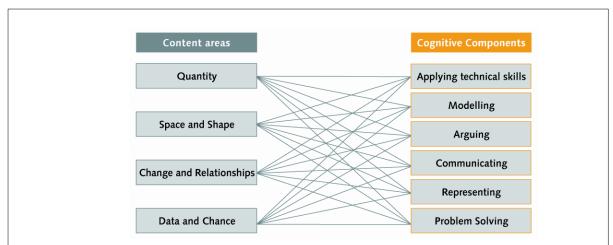


Fig. 1: Framework of mathematical competence in NEPS

### **Item Examples**

The following item samples are ordered by the target group of the items.

Sample item 1 was constructed for kindergarten children. At this age the children are tested in one-on-one situations. The interviewer reads the items to the child, often using illustrative materials – in this example a bowl and seven stones as well as a blanket to hide the bowl with the stones. This item belongs to the content area "Quantity", as it deals with sets, numbers and a simple operation. In this case the cognitive components are "Problem Solving" and "Technical Abilities and Skills".

#### Sample Item 1: Steine im Becher

In dieser Schüssel sind vier Steinchen. Jetzt lege ich noch drei Steinchen dazu.

[Die Schüssel ist abgedeckt, so dass das Kind nicht hineinsehen kann.]

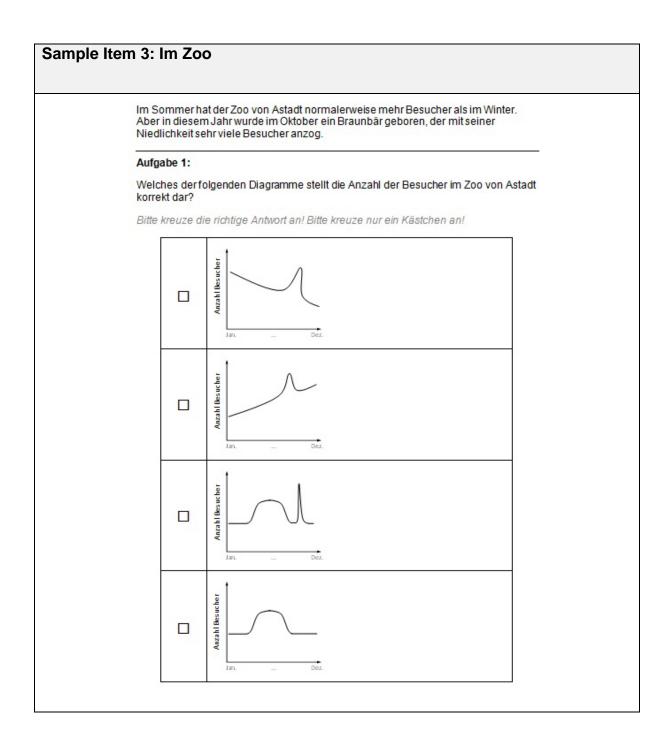
Kannst du mir sagen, wie viele Steinchen jetzt in der Schüssel sind?

The following sample items are used in regular paper-pencil-tests.

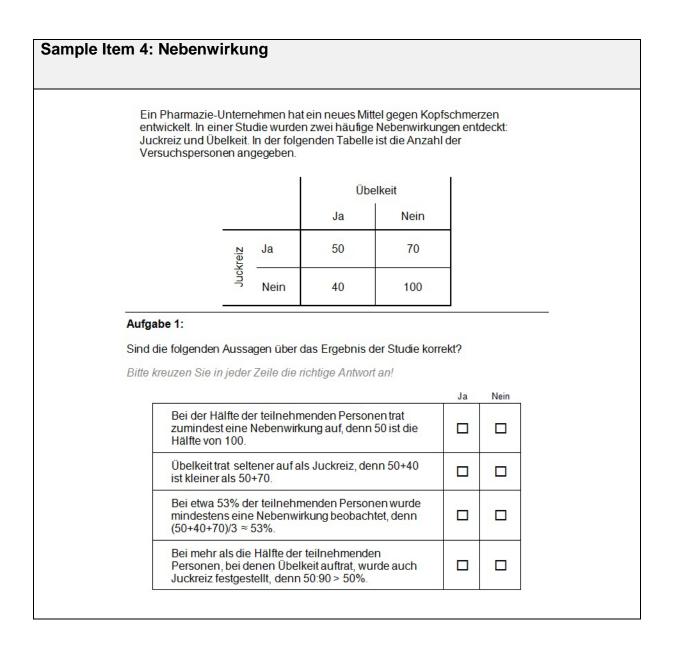
Example 2 shows an item from grades 5 to 7. It belongs to the content area "Space & Shape". "Modeling" and "Technical Abilities and Skills" are involved.

Samp	le Item 2	: Der Z	Zaun	
			esitzt ein rechteckiges Grundstück, das er einzäunen möchte. Nach hnungen kauft er 40 <i>m</i> Zaun.	
	Das	Grundstü	ck hat eine Breite von 8 m.	
	Aufg	jabe 1:		
	Wie	lang ist da	as Grundstück?	
	Bitte	kreuze d	ie richtige Antwort an! Bitte kreuze nur ein Kästchen an!	
			5 m	
			8 m	
			12 m	
			16 m	

Example 3 shows an item from grade 9 to college students. It belongs to the content area "Change & Relationships" and refers to the cognitive components "Using Representational Forms" as well as "Communicating".



Example 4 shows an item from University students and Adults. It belongs to the content area "Data & Chance", while the cognitive components are "Mathematical Argumentation", "Communication" and "Technical Abilities and Skills".



Beside the different content areas and cognitive components these examples also represent the range of answer formats:

The first one is an open question format, where the participants have to find and name the answer themselves. Examples 2 and 3 show regular multiple-choice-items with four answer options. Sample item 4 is a complex-multiple-choice item with two possible answer-options.

Here the participants have to decide whether something (in this case a statement) is right or wrong in each line.

#### References

Ehmke, T., Duchhardt, C., Geiser, H., Grüßing, M., Heinze, A., & Marschick, F. (2009). Kompetenzentwicklung über die Lebensspanne – Erhebung von mathematischer Kompetenz im Nationalen Bildungspanel. In A. Heinze & M. Grüßing (eds.). Mathematiklernen vom Kindergarten bis zum Studium: Kontinuität und Kohärenz als Herausforderung für den Mathematikunterricht (313-327). Münster: Waxmann.

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