

Avoiding Common Pitfalls of Evaluation

Evaluations and other forms of feedback are only effective if evaluators perform systematic observation and generate unbiased records. MSEPC recommends pre-exercise training, whether through a staff meeting, written instructions, or just-in-time training right before the exercise begins, to ensure unbiased records. Training should address the following potential pitfalls of exercise evaluation:

- **Observer Drift**
Observer drift occurs when evaluators lose interest or a common frame of reference during an exercise. It is usually the result of fatigue or lack of motivation.
- **Errors of Leniency**
Errors of leniency occur when evaluators tend to rate all actions positively.
- **Errors of Central Tendency**
Errors of central tendency occur when evaluators describe all activities as average to avoid making difficult decisions.
- **Halo Effect**
The halo effect occurs when evaluators form a positive impression of a person or group early in the exercise and permit this impression to influence their observations.
- **Hypercritical Effect**
The hypercritical effect occurs when evaluators believe it is their job to find something wrong, regardless of the players' performance.
- **Contamination**
Contamination occurs when evaluators know how an activity was performed in earlier exercises and permit this knowledge to affect their expectations.
- **Evaluator Bias**
Evaluator bias refers to errors that are traceable to characteristics of the evaluator. Evaluator bias can be minimized by careful selection of evaluators, or by employing multiple evaluators to observe the same functions.