

Percent versus Percentile

The term "percent" is an abbreviation of the Latin phrase per centum, which literally means "by the hundred." A percent represents the proportion of test material answered correctly out of a hundred. For example, if an individual took a 50-item test and answered 25 items correctly, the percent he or she got correct would be 50.

Percentiles, according to Drummond (2000), are one of most common tools to help interpret norm-referenced assessments. Percentile scores range from 1 to 99 and tell the test interpreter the percentage of individuals in the norm-group that the test taker outperformed. For example, if a test taker earned a score in the 74th percentile, the interpretation would be that 74% of the norm group performed at or below the test taker's score.