

What is the difference between a tabletop exercise, a drill, a functional exercise, and a full-scale exercise?

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According to the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP) there are seven types of exercises, each of which is either discussion-based or operations-based.

Discussion-based exercises familiarize participants with current plans, policies, agreements and procedures, or may be used to develop new plans, policies, agreements, and procedures. Types of discussion-based exercises include:

- **Seminar:** A seminar is an informal discussion, designed to orient participants to new or updated plans, policies, or procedures (e.g., a seminar to review a new Evacuation Standard Operating Procedure).
- **Workshop:** A workshop resembles a seminar, but is employed to build specific products, such as a draft plan or policy (e.g., a Training and Exercise Plan Workshop is used to develop a Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan).
- **Tabletop Exercise (TTX):** A tabletop exercise involves key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting. TTXs can be used to assess plans, policies, and procedures.
- **Games:** A game is a simulation of operations that often involves two or more teams, usually in a competitive environment, using rules, data, and procedure designed to depict an actual or assumed real-life situation.
- **Operations-based Exercises** validate plans, policies, agreements and procedures, clarify roles and responsibilities, and identify resource gaps in an operational environment. Types of operations-based Exercises include:
 - **Drill:** A drill is a coordinated, supervised activity usually employed to test a single, specific operation or function within a single entity (e.g., a fire department conducts a decontamination drill).
- **Functional Exercise (FE):** A functional exercise examines and/or validates the coordination, command, and control between various multi-agency coordination centers (e.g., emergency operation center, joint field office, etc.). A functional exercise does not involve any “boots on the ground” (i.e., first responders or emergency officials responding to an incident in real time).
- **Full-Scale Exercises (FSE):** A full-scale exercise is a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline exercise involving functional (e.g., joint field office, emergency operation centers, etc.) and “boots on the ground” response (e.g., firefighters decontaminating mock victims).