In this study an analysis strategy towards using the resonant inelastic X-ray scattering (RIXS) technique more effectively compared with X-ray absorption spectroscopy (XAS) is presented. In particular, the question of when RIXS brings extra information compared with XAS is addressed. To answer this question the RIXS plane is analysed using two models: (i) an exciton model and (ii) a continuum model. The continuum model describes the dipole pre-edge excitations while the exciton model describes the quadrupole excitations. Applying our approach to the experimental 1s2p RIXS planes of VO$_2$ and TiO$_2$, it is shown that only in the case of quadrupole excitations being present is additional information gained by RIXS compared with XAS. Combining this knowledge with methods to calculate the dipole contribution in XAS measurements gives scientists the opportunity to plan more effective experiments.