

# Using the practice

# Formative assessment

---

## Quick and easy ways to formatively assess students

There are many ways to easily gather formative assessment data before, during and after a particular sequence of learning. Some quick tools to do this include:

**Diagnostic tasks** – before starting new content, ask students to complete a task that requires the prerequisite skills. This will help you see what needs to be revised or if there are any gaps in their content knowledge to be addressed before moving onto the new content

**Traffic light cards** – after instructional tasks, ask students to hold up the card that corresponds with their level of understanding (Green = good to go, yellow = needs some clarification, red = did not understand)

**Exit slips** – at the end of a lesson, have students write an answer to a significant question from the day, or their key takeaway from the lesson

**Digital quiz tools** – to provide instant feedback and correction

**Using paper or mini whiteboards** – ask students to write and display their answers on one of these during questioning. This allows you to quickly scan each student's answer to check for understanding and ensure engagement before moving on

**Ask students some process-reflection questions** – when checking in with students, ask them to walk you through their thinking process, or how they got to the answer. This will help you quickly correct any thinking errors.

## The relationship between formative assessment and feedback

Formative assessment is used to check for student understanding. It is important to provide students with timely feedback following any formative assessment task to help them correct misconceptions or improve. Feedback is one of the most powerful tools to support student learning. Feedback enables students to understand where they are at in their learning (see mastery learning), and then progress that learning by providing steps to move forward.

When done well, formative assessment should be a quick way to gauge where your students are at. As such, giving feedback should be quick too. Good feedback tells students where they are going, how they are going, and what they need to do to improve. You might:

- have a bank of feedback comments based on certain task elements that you can quickly draw on for each student
- identify common themes of areas for improvement and give whole class feedback
- do on the spot correction during class instruction by correcting thinking processes and encouraging students to reflect on their answers and try again
- have regular check-ins with your students, or groups of students at the same stage of learning, to provide next steps
- provide time for your students to reflect on what they have learnt, and to self-assess where they still have difficulties.