

Formative Assessment Strategies

Exit statements or “Ticket out the Door”

This is an ideal summarizer and closure activity for times when there are only a few minutes at the end of the class. Students write something brief related to that day’s lesson. Ticket Out the Door allows students to reflect on, connect to, and/or summarize what they have learned; it allows the teacher to assess to what extent students have achieved the lesson’s outcome. This activity works well for vocabulary review, as well.

Examples:

- Name one (two, three) important thing(s) you learned in class today.
- Write one question about today’s content—something that left you puzzled.
- Read this problem and tell me what you will do first.
- How can you use what you learned today in _____?
- Give me at least one reason why _____.
- How does what you learned today connect to _____?
- Write your own word using the prefix/suffix/root of the week.
- What made learning easy or hard for you today?
- How will you/I know when you have mastered this concept?
- What predictions do you have for tonight’s/tomorrow’s reading?

Question: Think-Write-Share: The teacher poses a question, the students think for about 1 minute about the question, the student writes a 1 sentence response to the question, and the student shares the response with a classmate. The teacher has three or four students share their response.

Sentence Synthesis: The teacher gives the students three or four key words and the student writes a sentence utilizing these keywords.

Scribe Reports: Using a genre of his/her choice, a student summarizes what was learned from the previous day. He/she reads the summary to the class for a daily review.

Carousel Brainstorming: In small groups students brainstorm ideas on a given topic. They write their thoughts on posted chart paper for a given amount of time. Once their time is up, they rotate clockwise and read what another group has written and add their thoughts. This continues until all the topics have been explored or students have had a chance to read and respond to all the responses from all the groups.

Quick-Draws: Select a “big idea” or major concept within your lesson. Ask students to reflect on the meaning of the concept and create a visual image that represent that concept (about 3 minutes). Have student share and explain their image with a partner, in a small group (Numbered Heads), or in a Chalkboard Splash.

Chalkboard Splash: This is a variation of the Pair-Share, Quick-Write or Quick-Draw. Once students have recorded their individual thoughts, have them write their responses (or group responses) randomly on the whiteboard or chart/butcher paper. After recording their responses, ask students to create a 3-column chart with the headings: similarities, differences, and surprises. Students read and analyze the

other responses and record what they noticed under the columns. Students then get into small groups and share what they noticed. Have groups share with the whole class.

Analogies: Create analogies (similes are the easiest) using some of the topics you are studying. Ask students to formulate an explanation for how the analogy might be true. Ask students to share with their partners, in small groups, or in a Chalkboard Splash their responses. After analogies have been modeled a few times, ask students to create their own based on the topics they are learning.

Ranking: Select items, concepts, steps, events, descriptive paragraphs, or other relevant content information that can be analyzed and ranked within you unit or lesson. Ask students to rank them according to specified criteria. Ask them to provide justification for the way they chose to rank the concepts.

Numbered Heads: Allows students to be held accountable for being able to relay information that was learned during a group activity. Begin by asking students to count off from one to four. Confirm numbers by asking ones to stand, then twos, etc. Inform students that all group members will need to be able to present their group's information. During the debriefing portion of the activity, call out the number for the team member who will be presenting for the group. Because they don't know which number will be called until the end, all group members are held responsible for the information.

Interviews: In a think-pair-share format, students interview their partners to build prior knowledge.

People Search: This is an interviewing technique that helps students find out what they know about a topic before the topic has been taught. This activity can also be re-visited after the unit to correct, review, and/or reinforce student learning.

- Develop 10 – 20 key questions about the topic to be studied.
- Rewrite the questions using the following format: Find someone who can name....Find someone who knows....who can explain...
- Create a sheet with these statements followed by a space for the answer and another space for the responder's name.
- Have the students interview their classmates to find someone who can respond to the questions. The responder should sign the interviewer's sheet in the space provided.
- The responder can sign the interviewer's sheet only once.
- Limit the search to 10 or 15 minutes; have the class share.

Content BINGO: This is another type of interviewing technique based on the game of BINGO. This activity helps to activate prior knowledge and build background before a concept is taught; this activity can be used for review, as well.

- Develop 24 questions about the topic to be introduced and place them on a BINGO card format. Remember to leave the center square free.
- Students are to interview classmates to find correct answers to the questions.
- The responder tells what he/she believes to be the correct answer to the interviewer, and if the interviewer believes it to be the correct response, the responder initials the card. Only one set of responder's initials per card.
- The first student to have a BINGO wins the game.
- If the concept is difficult and I know the students will not know the answer, I allow them to use classroom resources.

ABC Preview/Review:

- Give each student (or pair of students) an ABC chart (see example below).
- Students write terms or associations related to the desired topic that begin with each letter of the alphabet. They should fill in as many boxes as possible.
- Begin study of the topic. Revisit the chart during the unit to add to the chart.
- Use as a review at the end of the unit.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z		

Graphic Organizers: Before a lesson encourage learners to map out and describe on paper their understanding of the topic. Present students with appropriate graphic organizer(s) and allow them to explain, relate and connect with past learning.

Murals or Collages: Students can create murals or collages to communicate prior knowledge. Display or have students present their work.

The Big Picture: Open every new topic by presenting the big picture of the entire unit. Do this verbally through lecture and discussion and visually with video and graphic organizers.

Reaction/Anticipation Guide: Provide students with a series of statements to respond to before reading a new selection or introducing a new unit/topic. Students respond based on prior knowledge and previous experiences. Reaction guides appeal to the emotions because they help to create a need-to-know learning situation while providing a purpose for learning new information. You can take them a step further by asking students to read or research to find evidence to support their opinions. The initial responses should not be graded, but are useful to identify gaps in knowledge or misconceptions.

- Create a reaction guide by writing a series of statements, usually 3 to 7, based on important points, major concepts, controversial ideas, or misconceptions about the material students will be reading or learning.
- Direct students to respond based on what they currently know or believe; they will respond again after reading or learning the lesson. Students respond using agree/disagree, yes/no or true/false.

Agree or disagree?		Evidence from reading/lecture
	Scientists use data from both living and dead subjects to conduct research on memory.	
	Aging seems to have a relatively minor effect on forgetfulness.	
	Alcohol abuse and Alzheimer’s are major causes of memory loss.	

Jot Thoughts: Teammates cover the table with ideas they generate using Post-It Notes or slips of paper. Jot Thoughts is a fun and unique way to get students to generate as many ideas as possible on a given topic.

- Place students in teams of 4 -6.
- Teacher names a topic and sets a time limit.
- Students announce and write as many ideas as they can in the allotted time, one idea per slip of paper, one student at a time, moving clockwise around the group.
- Students attempt to “cover the table” with post-it notes or slips of paper.
- Variations: Students read their notes out loud taking turns as they go around the circle or organize/classify their ideas under larger topics/concepts (creates context).

A Few more ideas for formative assessment

- Have student write for five minutes at the start of each class on a topic related to the day’s (or previous day’s) lesson. A quote from the reading assignment is a good starting point.
- Ask students to write definitions of terms or concepts that they misuse or don’t understand at the beginning of a unit.
- To focus on student interests, have students begin a unit of study by brainstorming all the questions they might have on the topic. These questions are compiled into a long list that students can classify or categorize. This provides a ground work of particular ideas or facts from which students may reason inductively toward general principles. Categories can be assigned to cooperative groups for research.
- Have students summarize what happened in class by asking them to write about three important things discussed in class that day. They can also answer such questions as, “What is one thing you learned today?” “What questions remain unanswered?” or “How do you feel about this subject?” This helps students organize their thoughts, synthesize for themselves, increase the value of the material, and relate the material to themselves. They can say they didn’t understand if they are specific about what they did and didn’t grasp. These reports can also be used to catch up students who have been absent or as test reviews.
- Use reading logs to improve reading comprehension and provide opportunities for expressive writing. Students record their thoughts and impressions on paper as they read. They do not record definitions or summarize the reading, just record what they think. These are not to be graded, but checked for completion.
- Another variation of reading logs is to have students record their opinions about current events in their journals; periodically request short personal summaries of articles, thereby creating a sequential critical record of readings and responses to the readings. At the end of the unit, have students choose one entry and write a persuasive essay.
- It is important to teach questioning strategies. Ask students to write out questions on reading or lectures. List all questions and have the class group them according to subject. Students select

three that they wish to discuss that day. The discussion can include WHY a particular question was asked. Students should discriminate between fact and opinion, major and minor importance, etc.

- Present a topic and give students 5 minutes to list questions about that topic. Encourage students to ask who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Give students a list of items (or show them the actual items) and have them write a character description or a story based on that list.
- Introduce a new topic by showing relevant pictures, listening to music or recorded sounds, or actual artifacts to generate thought and discussion. Have the students describe what they see or hear using the 5 senses. Discuss afterwards.
- Any number of statements work well to focus and build knowledge before introducing a topic or unit. Examples of sentences where you can provide the specifics include...
 - What if _____?
 - What do you know about _____?
 - What would you like to know about _____?
 - Imagine you are _____. What would you do?
 - Tell me in writing a few things about....
 - I wonder...
 - Describe your favorite....
 - What questions do you have about _____?
 - Explain to a classmate who was absent yesterday how to _____
 - Explain to _____ how to _____.
- Have students observe a group of objects that relate to your lesson (a list works if you don't have access to the actual items). Have students write any of the following: (1) how the items are related; (2) how they are different; (3) what they could/are used for; (4) who would use such items and why; or (5) have them create a classification system and explain their method of classification.

Ensuring Higher-Order Thinking

- Always ask students to explain why and justify or defend their thinking
- Use open questions: In what ways...How might things be different if...Why is this important....How does this relate to our lives? So what? Why is this important?
- Use a word bank to ensure that content vocabulary is used.