



75 Formative Assessment Examples

By Chris Drew (PhD) / August 25, 2023

Formative assessment is a type of assessment that takes place in the middle of a unit of work. It is usually compared to [summative assessment](#) which takes place at the end of the learning experience.

The key characteristic of formative assessment is that learning will take place before and after the assessment. The assessment is designed to help students:

- Stay on track
- Pivot if they are off track
- Deepen their knowledge based on an assessment of what they currently know
- Receive feedback on their progress

Similarly, it helps teachers:

- Change their teaching strategies based on student needs
- Assess students' current knowledge to inform future instruction
- Reflect on their own teaching practice for continual improvement

Below are some of the best and simplest examples of formative assessment

Formative Assessment Examples

1. 1-Minute Check In – Check in with every student in the class for one minute throughout the day to see how they are feeling about their tasks. Use the class roll to keep track.

2. 1-Minute Paper – Students get one minute to write a rapid-fire paper on the topic to try to show their depth of knowledge as fast as possible.

3. 3 Things – Students are asked to quickly list 3 things they want to know more about in regards to their topic, or 3 things they don't currently understand.



4. 3-2-1 Reflection (aka Exit Slip) – Have students write down 3 big ideas from what they learned, 2 insights (reflective comments), and 1 question they still have.

5. 3x Summarization – Have students summarize the topic in three ways: in 10-15 words, 30-50 words, and 75-100 words. As they step up in word count, they will need to add some more depth and detail to demonstrate deeper knowledge.

6. 5 W's and H – The 5W's and H method gets students to write down their knowledge of what, when, where, who, why, and how to demonstrate their depth of knowledge about a topic.

7. Anonymous Feedback Box – Have students place anonymous comments about what they're struggling with into a feedback box. This will allow students to share their concerns with the safety of anonymity. It helps gather crowd-sourced formative assessment but isn't good for individual formative feedback.

8. [Brainstorming](#) – Have the students come together in groups and write down the key question in the middle of a piece of paper. Then, have them brainstorm ways to answer the question around the central question.

9. Check for Transfer – Have the students transfer the current concept from class to a new context. For example, if students are learning a math problem, check if they can apply it in a supermarket context.

10. Cold Calling – Let students know that you will not ask them to put their hands up to answer questions. Instead, you will call on one student randomly and all students by the end of class. This keeps everyone engaged and allows you to do spot checks of knowledge.

11. Comments on Drafts – Have students submit drafts of their essays to provide formative comments at least two weeks before submission.

12. Compare and Contrast – Have students compare two components of what is being learned to help them demonstrate their current knowledge. For example, in a biology class, you could have the students compare reptiles to mammals based on several key criteria.

13. Concept Map – Have students complete a concept map demonstrating their understanding of how concepts connect to one another in visual form.



14. Corner Quiz – Place letters A, B, C, and D on four separate corners of the room. Students are given a multiple choice quiz on what they are learning. Students have to run to the corner that they think has the right answer, e.g. if the answer is D, they run to the corner with the D on it. The teacher can look to see which students are consistently getting the wrong answer (or following others!).

15. Doodle It (Visualization) – Have students draw a representation of what they have learned in a visual format. This is a great formative assessment task [for visual learners](#).

16. Elevator Pitch – Students give a 2-minute ‘elevator pitch’ speech about how much they know about the topic. In two minutes or less, they need to show you the depth of their knowledge.

17. Extension Project – Give students an extension project to see how well they apply the information in a new and less structured context. An example might be getting them to make a diagram about the topic.

18. Five Whys – Have students to ask ‘why’ five times to see if they can get to the root of their knowledge and understanding on a topic. This helps you understand how deeply they know the topic. For example, if the student says “Shakespeare is the best writer in history” ask why, then they say “because his poetry tells the best stories”, then ask why several more times, until they have fleshed out their knowledge to the best of their ability.

19. Flashcards – Have students answer flashcard questions mid-way through the unit of work to check for understanding.

20. Flip Chart Check In – Students get into groups and write anything and everything they know about the topic onto a flip chart. They then present their flip chart to the rest of the class.

21. Formative Presentation – Have the students give a presentation on what they have learned so far. This can be great for a mid-term check-in so you can help students stay on track and go deeper for their end-of-term assessment on the same topic.

22. Hand in, pass out – Students are assessed on a pop quiz. They do not write their own name on the paper. They then hand in their answers and the teacher passes out the answer sheets randomly to the class. The class then grades the anonymous work they are given. The students are given a chance to grade others’ work. The teacher can take the answer in afterward to see the questions that were most commonly incorrect to see what to focus on.



23. Homework Task – Homework is perhaps the most extensively used example of formative assessment. When you grade your students' homework you can get a good idea of their level of understanding of content explored in class.

24. Hot Seat – A student sits in a seat in front of their peers and gets rapid-fire questions from their peers to test their quick responses. Great for math quizzes.

25. Hot Topics – Students choose one aspect of what they are learning and present in front of the class for 5 minutes about their knowledge, then take 5 minutes of questions.

26. Identify the Misconception – Give students a common misconception about their topic and ask them to explain what the misconception is and how to improve upon it.

27. Intentional Mistake – Intentionally embed an error into the students' work or instructions and see whether they can identify it part-way through the lesson.

28. KWL Chart – A KWL chart asks students to write down what they know, what they want to know, and what they learned in the lesson. Have students complete this chart at the end of a lesson as a quick formative assessment that can help you structure your follow-up lessons based on student feedback.

29. Lunch Pass – Ask every student a question. If they can get their question right, they can go to lunch.

30. Metacognition – Have the students reflect on what they did, what they learned, why they learned it, how they can apply it, and what they still are unsure about it.

31. [More Knowledgeable Other](#) – Have students sit beside a student who is one step ahead of them and learn from the more knowledgeable student. The more knowledgeable student gives them feedback and assesses their progress, giving formative corrections to help them progress. Often, students who are at a similar level to one another are better at explaining concepts than teachers.

32. Open-Ended Questioning – Ask students questions that cannot be answered with a Yes/No answer so you can gather their depth of knowledge in the answer.

33. Paraphrasing – Give students a piece of information then ask them to repeat the information back to you in their own words to see if they understand it.



34. Peer Assessment – Have students grade each other’s work. This allows students to see other students’ work to gather whether they’re on track and how to improve.

35. Photo Assessment – Have students take photos of things they think best represent their current level of knowledge. Students might take photos of their current projects. Then, have them write descriptions underneath that explain what they currently know about the topic.

36. Pop Quiz – Give the students a quiz at the beginning, middle, or end of a lesson that involves just 5 to 10 questions that can allow you to see how much they know.

37. Postcard – The students write a postcard or letter from one historical figure to another describing something. For example, psychology students might write a letter from Bronfenbrenner to his wife explaining his [Ecological Systems Theory](#).

38. Prediction and Hypothesis – Halfway through the lesson, have students make a prediction or hypothesis about what will happen by the end of the lesson. This will help the teacher know if the students are starting to understand what is being taught.

39. [Prior Knowledge Onboarding Task](#) – Have students write down what they already know about a topic before the first lesson. This will help you know what level you need to start your teaching at and help prevent redundancy in re-teaching things students already know.

40. RSQC2 – RSQC2 stands for Recall, Summarize, Question, Connect, Comment. Students start with recall which involves listing words or phrases that they recall from class. They then summarize the words by putting them all into a sentence that explains the topic. For Question, they list any questions they have that are unanswered. For connect, students write about connections between the lesson and the overall goals of the unit of work. For Comment, students provide a feedback comment to the teacher evaluating their teaching.

41. Run an Opinion Poll – Poll the students on their opinion of the topic and examine the responses. The teacher can gauge students’ knowledge based on their answers in the poll.

42. Running Records – Have students take notes throughout the class on questions they have and things they don’t understand. As you come around to check on the student, ask them to show their running records notecard.



43. Spaced Repetition Testing – Students are given pop quizzes at strategically placed intervals to help students remember information they may be forgetting. For example, you might give students a quiz after 1 day, then 3, then 8, then 15. The answers from the quiz can help you assess student retention of knowledge learned in class.

44. Sticky Notes – Have students leave a sticky note on their desk with a comment about what they would like to know more about.

45. Student Becomes Teacher – Have the student teach the concept they are learning to a small group of peers.

46. Students Create a Test – Have each student create a 20-question test that they would use to test someone on the topic. Students write the answers to the test on a separate paper. Then, have the students swap mock-up tests with each other and fill out the answers.

47. Submit a Research Proposal – Have students submit a mock (or real!) research proposal stating what they would want to research further into the topic they have been discussing ([use my research proposal examples](#)). Get them to discuss what they would research, why they are curious about that aspect, and how they would go about it. This can reveal a great deal of new information about the student's current level of knowledge.

48. Submit an Essay Plan – For students writing an essay, get them to submit their essay plan for approval. Using this method, you can catch if a student is off track and correct the course so they submit a high-quality essay.

49. TAG Feedback – Have students assess one another by getting them to tell a peer what they did well, ask them a question about their knowledge, then give feedback to their peer.

50. Text Rendering – Students take one quote that they think is the most important or illuminating from an article and explain why they think it's the best quote.

51. Think-Pair-Share – Students spend one minute individually writing down key points from what they learned. They then pair up with a partner and compare notes. Finally, the pair share what they learned with the class. The class can ask questions and the teacher can assess the pair's knowledge from their presentation and responses.



52. Timeline (Historical) – Students create a historical timeline demonstrating their knowledge of the sequence of events from a historical process or series of events.

53. Timeline (Lesson Reflection) – A [lesson reflection](#) timeline gets students to reflect on their lesson by writing down

54. Ungraded Essay – Have students submit an essay or essay draft that is not graded. Students submit the essay only for feedback, which will inform their final submission.

55. Venn Diagram – Students use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast two elements of what they are learning. The outer sides of the Venn diagram show unique features of each element. The overlap shows the similarities.

Instant Formative Assessment For Teachers

56. Fingers Up – Have students show their level of knowledge by showing a certain number of fingers. One finger means uncertainty and discomfort while five fingers means strong confidence with the content.

57. Hand Thermometer – Students put their hand up only a distance they think they are comfortable with the knowledge. A low hand up shows mild comfort, a medium shows moderate understanding, and a stretched hand shows high confidence in the content.

58. Quick Nod – Ask students to nod if they understand. This can be great as a very fast way to check for comprehension in the middle of a task.

59. Red / Green Cards – Provide students with red and green cards. They can hold up the green card if they are ready to move on to the next part of the lesson or the red card if they're still confused.

60. Thumbs Up, Middle, Thumbs Down – Have students quickly respond with their thumbs to show levels of understanding or enthusiasm.

61. Traffic Lights – An extension of red/green cards, the traffic lights system also have an amber color for students who are feeling tentative about their progress. For this one, you can pair students who held up green lights with those who held up amber lights to teach each other while the teacher works with students who held up red lights.



62. Two Roses and a Thorn – Have students present two things they are happy or knowledgeable about, and one thing they are still finding “prickly”.

63. Watch Body Language – Students who misunderstand may be crossing their legs, looking away, or frowning.

Self-Evaluative Formative Assessment

64. Self-Evaluation on Marking Rubric – Provide students the criteria you will be using to grade their work (also known as a marking rubric) and get them to self-assess what grade they think they will get.

65. Self-Sort – Have students choose which level they are at in a task: beginner, intermediate, or advanced, and have them select the next piece of work based on their self-evaluated level.

66. SMART Goals Self-Evaluation – Have the students complete a [personal SMART Goal](#) template demonstrating what their goals are and whether they think they are on track for achieving it.

67. SWOT Analysis – Have students complete a [SWOT analysis](#) that demonstrates what their strengths are in relation to what they are learning, what their weaknesses are, opportunities for improvement for the rest of the unit of work, and threats that they could avoid. This will make sure they stay on track.

Technology Enhanced Formative Assessment

68. Blog About It – Have students write weekly 200-word blog posts about what they learned and comment on each student’s blog comment assessing what they did well and what they need to focus on in the next week.

69. Clickers – Use clickers (instant Yes/No responses – technology required) to provide instant feedback to the teacher on their level of understanding.

70. Forum Comments – Have students submit one forum comment per week to their online discussion board for the teacher to provide a formative assessment and comment on what they did well and how to improve.



71. Padlet – Have students use the Padlet app to contribute their ideas to a virtual notice board to show their thoughts and knowledge to the group.

72. Text the Answer – Have students text an answer to you in 50 words or less once they have completed the task.

73. Twitter Comment – Have students tweet what they learned in class today and tweet a reply to a friend’s comment.

74. Write 1 if you Understand, 2 if you Don’t – This is a task for online lessons. Have students simply write a 1 or 2 in the chatbox. This can also get quiet groups to start contributing in a small no-risk step.

75. YouTube Communities Poll – Have students complete a YouTube poll using the YouTube communities tab.

Conclusion

Formative assessment are usually [informal evaluations](#) that give students an opportunity to pivot and improve based on the teacher’s feedback. At the same time, it’s valuable for the teacher who needs to assess students’ current knowledge and pain points in order to adjust their teaching practices and maximize students’ chances of passing the summative assessment that will occur at the end of the unit of work.