

When you first introduce new material, pupils need a large amount of support and guidance to understand the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the material you are teaching them. As they become more proficient, the support can be slowly reduced whilst their independence during practice increases until they can work independently.

During teaching and learning, the general process for this is to begin with teacher input, followed by guided practice, followed by independent practice. Some people refer to the process of gradually building pupil independence and ownership over their learning as ‘I do (teacher input), we do (guided practice), you do (independent practice)’. This process may happen within one lesson or over a sequence of lessons to gradually build pupil knowledge and help them reach their lesson objective or learning goal. This session will focus on the process within a lesson, but you will explore how this is built in over a sequence of lessons in Module 6.

Start with the lesson objective

When planning your instruction, it is important that you begin by establishing what the lesson objective is. Once you know this, you can identify what the pupils will need to know, or be able to do, in order to achieve the lesson objective. This information should inform the focus of your teaching instruction. The explanations, modelling, guided practice and independent practice that you plan should gradually build pupils' knowledge, working towards the lesson objective.

Gradually increase pupil independence

TEACHER INPUT

This occurs when new material is first being introduced. It involves the teacher informing, explaining, modelling and providing examples without pupil input. This is where you might use worked examples to outline the steps of a procedure to pupils.

The reason this is teacher-led without pupil input is that when new material is being introduced, pupils are novices and therefore, are unlikely to have the appropriate knowledge to contribute to the process at this stage.

GUIDED PRACTICE

This involves the teacher and pupils doing a task together. This is where you begin to gradually release the responsibility to your pupils. It involves you completing parts of the process and asking pupils to contribute to the incomplete parts. Here you might use partially completed examples to gradually build pupil independence.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

This is the stage where pupils practise new material without adult support. When first setting up independent practice, you may still provide tasks that scaffold pupils' learning, but these should be removed over time to allow pupils to work entirely independently. Rosenshine (2012) recognises that this is vital for pupils to become fluent or automatic in information retrieval or completing a procedure. During this stage, the teacher monitors pupil practice to identify and address misconceptions to individual pupils or the whole class. They also encourage pupils to use metacognitive strategies to monitor their own learning and develop their ability to self-regulate.

An important note

Whilst these stages have been separated into three groups, the process of building pupil independence should be viewed as a continuum whereby support gradually reduces as pupils become more proficient.

This will not occur in a linear fashion. In practice, you may have to shift back and forth between these three phases during a lesson to address misunderstandings or introduce further challenge.

Throughout this module, building pupils' expertise over a lesson has been broken down into different phases which are covered in different sessions. However, it is important that you remember the phases are linked and should build on one another.