



To provide pupils with an opportunity to consolidate their learning and ensure they obtain a high success rate, pupils independent practice should align with the material covered during guided practice.

For example, if you modelled how to find the area of rectangular shapes during guided practice, that's what pupils should focus on during independent practice. It would be inappropriate to ask them to find the area of compound shapes as the strategy for doing so is different. Pupils would need to see this being modelled and engage in guided practice before working on this independently, otherwise, you are likely to obtain a low success rate from many pupils and need to reteach the material. Therefore, it is vital you carefully plan both the guided and independent practice, so they focus on practising the same key learning points.

Independent practice should be planned to ensure pupils think hard about the material they have covered during guided practice. This seems straightforward and obvious but can be more challenging than it might appear.

## **Ensure pupils have the domain-specific knowledge required**

Sometimes, you may think you are planning activities that provide opportunities for pupils to practice or demonstrate the knowledge that you have been developing, but this may not always be the case. In order to complete an activity successfully, pupils need to have all the knowledge required. However, certain aspects can be overlooked when planning independent practice for pupils.

An example of this could be pupils writing a newspaper article to demonstrate or practice their knowledge of a topic (Enser, 2019). Unless they have been taught how to write a newspaper article; how to generate a catchy title, how to write in columns, or how to use direct and indirect quotes, then they won't get the opportunity to practise what you intended. Because of the limited capacity of working memory, they will be consumed with the features of a newspaper article, instead of demonstrating or practising their knowledge of a topic. If, however, pupils have already mastered the writing components of a newspaper article, then this could be a suitable way for them to present the material they are learning about. It is important that pupils have the relevant domain-specific knowledge before being asked to apply their knowledge or think critically.

Therefore, it is important you spend time carefully planning activities that provide pupils with the opportunity to practise or demonstrate their learning, taking into consideration *any* additional foundational knowledge they may require.

## **Which activity is most appropriate?**

It is important to ensure independent practice enables pupils to practise the new material you have taught them.

## **Over to you!**

Complete [this short activity](#) where you will be asked to read a scenario and select the independent task that you think is the most appropriate for pupils to complete.

When starting pupils off on a task, it is also important to check they understand what to do before they begin. This helps to ensure they can begin immediately. There are a number of ways you can do this, but one way is to ask pupils to repeat instructions back to you before setting them off.

## Over to you!

Think about an activity you recently set. Consider the following questions and record your responses in the notes tab (or your own notebook):

- How successful were pupils at this activity and why do you think that was?
- Is there anything you would do differently next time?