

# Why is good assessment critical, and what makes it effective?

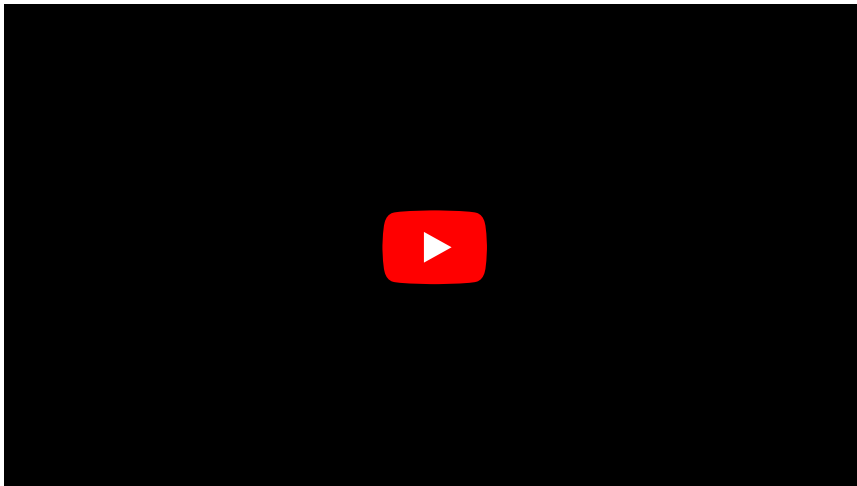
In some form or another, assessment is being carried out by the teacher almost every minute of the lesson. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Effective assessment is critical to teaching because it provides teachers with information about pupils' understanding and learning needs.

The function of assessment sounds relatively simple; find out what the pupil knows, and doesn't know, and plan subsequent opportunities to impart the relevant knowledge or skills based on the identified need. And yet, it can be a challenge to reliably assess a pupil's level of understanding. For example, an 'on-task' child may appear to understand their learning, yet the work they are so busily producing may be full of errors based on an unidentified misconception. In the same way, only by removing the learning scaffold from a seemingly confident pupil, might you discover that they cannot replicate the learning in a standardised test - implying that the knowledge was not firmly encoded into the long-term memory in the first place. It is therefore critical that you have a clear understanding of what makes assessment effective in order to best support teaching and learning decisions.

## Effective assessment

Effective assessment provides teachers with reliable information about pupils' understanding. However, for this information to be of real value, the teacher must use it effectively to inform feedback and support pupils to move forward.

Watch Professor Rob Coe as he explains why assessment is such a powerful teaching and learning tool, and what information it can give you about your pupils.



Direct Link: [What does effective assessment incorporate? - Professor Robert Coe](#)

Transcript: [What does effective assessment incorporate? - Professor Robert Coe](#)

[\(this link opens in a new window/tab\)](#)

As highlighted by Rob Coe, good assessment gives teachers a window into their pupils' minds. The questions that are asked and the tasks that are set provide insight into the information that has been processed and subsequently stored in the long-term memory. Throughout the video he also emphasises the importance of the two-way nature of feedback. For the teacher, good assessment makes clear the knowledge that has been understood. It also gives the teacher information as to whether they need to reteach concepts or work further with a small group. For the pupil, feedback provides a way to move forward with their learning and helps them to develop secure mental models around a concept.

In order to ensure that the information you gather is accurate, Rob stresses that it is crucial to know the **purpose** of the assessment. The next section will explore how you might decide on the purpose of your assessments.