

Assessment tasks linked to the lesson objective

Let's return to the questions posed by Mick Walker when deciding on the purpose of assessment:

- **What are you trying to assess?**
- **Why are you trying to assess this?**
- **What are you going to do with the information?**
- **How are you going to feed back the information to pupils?**

Once these questions have been considered, the only question remaining is '**How are you going to assess learning?**' - what tasks will your pupils undertake in order to demonstrate their level of understanding and application of learning?

There are multiple ways you could assess pupil understanding. The 'how' might take the form of questioning, a matching activity, a low-stakes quiz, a performance, through interacting with play, or various other methods that might lead to an indication of pupil understanding and highlight gaps in knowledge. The key is to make sure that the 'how', in whatever form that takes, is linked to the lesson objective and always indicates levels of understanding or skill.

Case study

Read the account below from Primary teacher and ECT mentor Mathew Sullivan. Mathew explains how the teacher planned for the class to write a newspaper report as the assessment task, but it didn't create the assessment opportunity the teacher had hoped for.

Case study

I observed a KS2 lesson on the Viking invasion at Lindisfarne. The lesson objective was very precise and would have allowed the teacher to make clear inferences about pupil learning. The objective was to recall the date and key events of the attack on the Lindisfarne monastery. Before the lesson we had spoken as a phase team about the five key pieces of knowledge we wanted pupils to recall from the invasion, and together we had created a presentation that emphasised these.

The beginning of the lesson was very effective, and the teacher even asked members of the class to act out key moments, which really brought the learning to life. The teacher then set the pupils a task to write a newspaper report on the events of the invasion as a method of assessing whether they could recall the key historical facts.

When we sat down after the lesson and looked at what the pupils had learned, the results were somewhat below par. For the majority of the class, the format of the newspaper article had added a layer of complexity to the task that had distracted them from fully achieving the learning objective. Some had written very little, others had not written in the style of a newspaper article and had instead written prose as if they were answering a question, and only a small number had managed to achieve the correct newspaper features, but even they had difficulty ordering the events and deciding whether they should be writing from the perspective of an eye-witness, or the reporter themselves.

When reflecting on why they had selected the newspaper report as an assessment task, the teacher explained that they thought it would be a 'fun activity' for the class to complete. However, with it being a full term since the class had completed a unit on newspapers, and no retrieval of key features had taken place in the lesson, the pupils were not able to demonstrate their learning effectively; remembering how to write a newspaper took precedence over recalling the key historical events. It has been my experience that my mentees can be more concerned with the 'activity' for the lesson, often asking themselves 'what are we going to do tomorrow?'. The question that I often tell them to ask themselves instead is 'what are we going to learn tomorrow?'. It is a subtle distinction, but one that puts the focus squarely onto the learning.

As the objective of the lesson had not been around creating a newspaper article, we discussed different activities that they could have set in order to meet the lesson objective. My mentee decided that a simple recount would have allowed pupils to better demonstrate their learning, and in turn would have provided a clearer indication of their understanding. We did both agree that a newspaper report would be an engaging way to recall the tale of the invasion, but only once the foundational knowledge of the events was assessed as secure, and the features of a newspaper article had been recalled.

This case study highlights the need to carefully consider the assessment tasks you plan for your class. Is the task giving pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their learning towards the lesson objective, and will it give you information about misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge?

Good assessment helps teachers avoid being overly influenced by potentially misleading factors. In this instance, the teacher could have made some inaccurate inferences on pupil learning because the assessment task they set was not an effective method of assessing the target learning. If the task had been to write a recount of the events, the class would most likely have achieved a higher success rate, and the subsequent assessments would have been more accurate.



Over to you!

Select a lesson that you will be teaching this week. How aligned are the lesson objective and assessment activities that you have planned? Record your answer in the [notes tab](#) (or your own notebook):

Consider these questions:

- Is the lesson objective achievable and measurable?
- Does the assessment task allow the pupils to demonstrate their learning?
- How will the completion of the task support you to identify levels of pupil understanding or skill?