

Anticipating misconceptions

When planning for effective assessment, all teachers in the previous section mentioned questioning and the planning of questions to check for pupil understanding at various points across the lesson.

Effective questioning was explored in detail in Module 3. Below are some of the key features highlighted in that module that should be incorporated into your questioning:

- Avoid self-report questions; ask questions that directly assess pupil understanding of the material being taught
- Check whole-class understanding
- Provide appropriate wait time after asking a question to allow pupils to generate a response

Structuring your questions to enable the identification of knowledge gaps and misconceptions is a good use of planning time. It will mean that you gather information at key points in the lesson that will help you decide what to do next.

Hinge questions

A question type that can be a useful tool for identifying knowledge gaps and misconceptions is a hinge question. A hinge question can take the form of an individual question or multiple-choice question; they are a check for understanding that allows you to gather assessment information from the whole class simultaneously. The reason they are called a hinge question is that they come at the 'hinge-point' of the lesson, this is a point where:

1. You move from one key idea / task / or learning point to the next.
2. Understanding the content before the hinge is a prerequisite for the next part of the lesson.

The results of the hinge question will determine whether you move on to the next chunk of learning, or work to consolidate, practise, or re-teach the previous concept further. They are also very useful for helping you to determine whether a pupil has met the lesson objective or not.

Here is an example of a hinge question for a primary science lesson:

Example

Identify all the statements that are true about the Moon:

1. It reflects light
2. It orbits the Earth
3. It can't be seen during the day because there is too much light
4. It has no gravity

This is an effective hinge question because:

- The question allows the teacher to ascertain a snapshot of *all* pupils' levels of understanding.
- It enables the teacher to be highly responsive to pupil needs and make a quick decision about next steps.
- The question would also not take long for the pupils to respond to and would not impact the pace of a lesson.