

4. Multiple-Choice Hinge Questions

Tom Sherrington and Sara Stafford

What's the idea?

Used part way through a learning sequence, multiple-choice questions are an efficient and effective way of gauging understanding and checking for misconceptions before moving on to new learning.

What does it mean?

The 'hinge' is a moment of diagnosis, the point when a teacher must decide whether a key concept has been understood well enough to move on to another concept or idea. Closed questions, presented as multiple choices, can be used to collect instant data from the whole class to help with this.

The most effective hinge questions go beyond simple recall, combining concepts and challenging students to apply ideas. It is always worth including plausible detractors (options which either sound right or could be right in another context) to highlight common misconceptions around a particular topic.

What are the implications for teachers?

Set a pass-rate in advance for an acceptable level of mastery, for example, 80%. If pupils fall short, the topic may need to be taught again before moving on.

In different scenarios, it might be useful to anonymise answers. Under-confident students, for example, may feel more comfortable taking risks when answering if they know their names won't be displayed.

It also might help to collect information about which students need more support. In

these cases, different collection methods yield different datasets and results. Avoid 'hands-up' responses and use mini-whiteboards, iPads or voting pods to collect immediate feedback that everyone has participated in.

With this in mind, you also need to be prepared for how you will support both the students who have achieved mastery at this level and those who need further explanation.

Plan question sequences which include common misconceptions and mistakes, but always ensure that these are plausible; silly answers are a waste of time.

TOP TIP / Designing effective hinge questions takes time. Start with key curriculum areas that you will be able to reuse and build a catalogue of questions.

Want to know more?

Bromley, M. (2017) *Teaching Practice: Hinge Questions*. Available at: <http://sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/teaching-practice-hinge-questions/>
 Quigley, A. (2012) *Questioning – Top Ten Strategies*. Available at: <https://www.theconfidentteacher.com/2012/11/questioning-top-ten-strategies/>
 Fletcher-Wood, H. (2013) *Do they understand this well enough to move on? Introducing hinge questions*. Available at: <https://improvingteaching.co.uk/2013/08/17/do-they-understand-this-well-enough-to-move-on-introducing-hinge-questions/>