

# Checking pupil understanding using online quizzes



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## What's the idea?

Quizzes and tests are not just good for assessing how much a student knows and what they still need to learn to inform future planning. Online quizzing tools also support teachers to check pupil understanding and help students take advantage of the 'testing effect'.

## What does it mean?

Research into the 'testing effect' shows that one of the most effective ways to secure material in students' long-term memory is dedicating time to retrieving the information from memory frequently (for example, see Brown, Roediger and McDaniel, 2014). Tests tend to be quite formal and often come in the form of high-stakes, end-of-unit or end-of-module tests and end-of-year exams. But it does not need to be thus. Given that frequent retrieval practice boosts retention,

teachers could incorporate frequent, low-stakes or no-stakes testing and quizzing into their lessons. In this way, testing and quizzing become part of the learning process, not just assessment.

## What are the implications for teachers?

There are many software packages and digital publishing tools that can help you embed frequent retrieval practice into your lessons. Quizlet or Kahoot are useful off-the-shelf quiz makers, while your school's virtual learning environment may also have a quizzing function. Google for Education and Microsoft also offer quizzing options. If you have greater technical expertise, you might enjoy creating your own

quizzes and interactive exercises using tools such as H5P. These all give you access to the whole class' results quickly, effectively and almost effortlessly. This allows you to check for understanding, while taking advantage of frequent retrieval practice.

Even if your resources are primarily paper-based, you could consider linking to dedicated web pages where learners can self-test. QR codes and URL shortening services are a great way to blend hard copy materials with online resources as they can be stuck in exercises books. Many smartphone and tablet apps and web tools, such as those mentioned above, also allow you to create your own flashcards to use repeatedly as part of your students' revision routine.

### TOP TIPS

- Remember that the point of low-stakes tests is not so much to assess, as to help students learn. View them more as another classroom activity or homework task and explain this clearly to your pupils.
- Recognise the value of learning key facts (vocabulary, dates, key events). It is impossible for your students to think critically about that which they don't know.

## Want to know more?

- Brown P, Roediger H and McDaniel M (2014) *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Rosenshine B (2012) Principles of instruction: Research-based strategies that all teachers should know. *American Educator* 36(1): 12–19.
- Weinstein Y, Sumeracki M and Caviglioli O (2018) *Understanding How We Learn: A Visual Guide*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.