

# Day-to-day differentiation



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## What's the idea?

It's a common misconception that differentiation is about personalising learning at all times. Rather, it's a pragmatic process that enables teachers to maximise each student learning in the long term..

## What does it mean?

Any group of students is 'mixed ability' – each learner will progress at different rates with different concepts. This doesn't mean teachers should reinforce differences by lowering expectations for some students, setting them easier work or giving them more scaffolding support than they need.

As much as possible, learning aims should be the same for all. Day-to-day differentiation then, is a process of giving students appropriate levels of feedback, scaffolding and

targeted practice to support them in achieving these common learning goals. It's not about giving different work to each student.

## What are the implications for teachers?

Over time, we need to ensure each student is making good progress: some days the higher attainers will need a stronger push; on others, a few strugglers will need extended attention. Mostly, if we try to set clear expectations for everyone, give good feedback and build in plenty of practice, it's likely that everyone will benefit.

In practice, differentiation is supported by some simple elements:

**Design question sets and tasks with increasing difficulty within a topic area so that there is**

**always another level of challenge ahead. This approach can also be applied to questions asked verbally.**

**Provide scaffolding resources, such as writing frames, for those who need them, withdrawing them as students become more confident, fluent and independent.**

**Provide clear knowledge organisers and teach explicit revision methods such as self-quizzing, elaboration and the need to link abstract ideas to concrete examples.**

## Top tips:

Plan question sets that span a range of difficulty but with plenty of practice at each level, not rushing through. This keeps everyone focused on the same content while offering a next-level challenge opportunity for each student.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- » Jones K (2018) Love to Teach: Research and Resources for Every Classroom. Woodbridge: John Catt Educational Ltd.
- » McGill RM (2017) Mark. Plan. Teach. London: Bloomsbury Education.
- » Wiliam D (2011) Embedded Formative Assessment. Bloomington, Indiana: Solution Tree Press.