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Assessment For Learning Tools

AfL is successful when embedded in teaching and learning.

This toolkit aims to help by presenting different facets, activities and tools for teachers to use in order to achieve this.

I hope you find it useful!

Sources

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My head
Other people's heads

AfL Tools

Students write Questions
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Students write questions

For example –

- About what they would like to know on a new topic
- To ask the teacher or other students in order to assess their learning
- To demonstrate their learning/misconceptions/areas they would like to further explore

The classroom could have a question box where students drop questions at the end of a lesson.

Or, a plenary could involve students writing questions that the class then work on together, or forms the basis of the next lesson.

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Students ask questions

Create opportunities for students to ask questions. This could be of their peers, of the teacher or as a means to develop discussion.

A ‘question box’ for written questions offers a different means of communication for students

Allow time for students to ask questions about pieces of work. This helps open up assessment and eliminate ambiguity

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Open vs closed

Closed questions can be useful however are not great at facilitating the use of abstract thinking skills, encouraging talking or eliciting much understanding. Open questions are more likely to do this and thus improve learning.

e.g.

Did you go out last night?

What did you after class yesterday?

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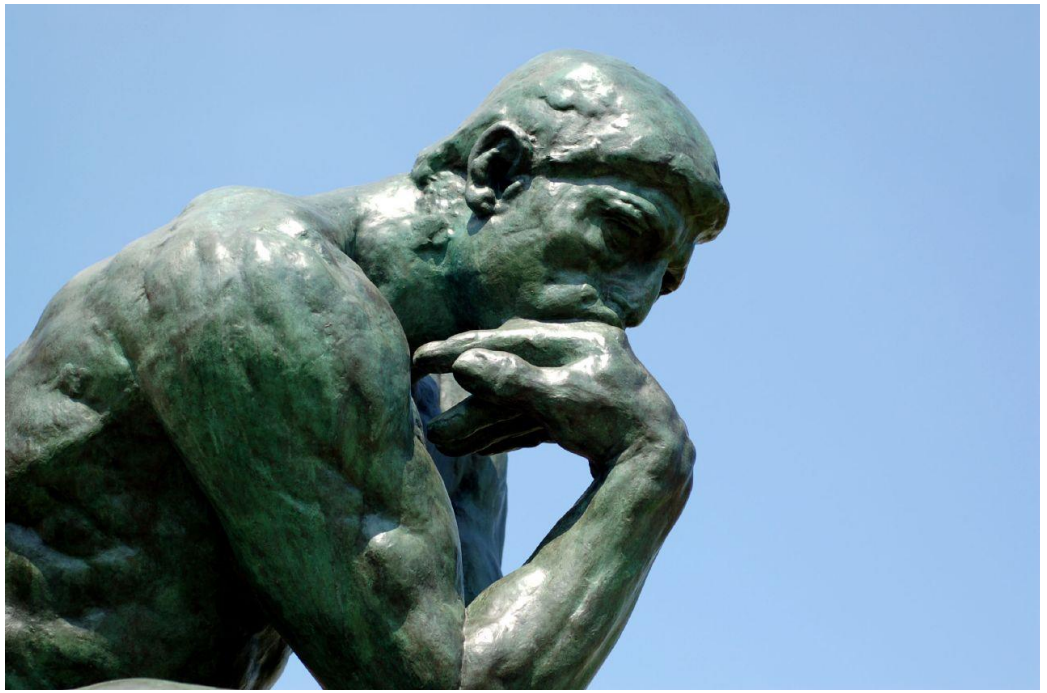
What is a ‘good’ question?

Discuss with students what makes a ‘good’ question. The process can explicitly show them the difference between open and closed questions. They can then come up with questions on a topic and decide which are best, and then move on to discuss and answer these.



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Good question stems

Why does…?

What if…?

How would you…?

Could you explain…?

What might…?

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Invert the question

Instead of asking a question that requires factual recall, invert it to request explicit reasoning.

e.g.

‘Is France a democracy?’

becomes

‘What does it mean for a country to be a democracy?’

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X and Y

Ask students why X is an example of Y

e.g.

Why is an apple an example of a fruit?

Why is a fox an example of a mammal?

Questioning in this way avoids factual recall and asks for the underlying reasoning to be made explicit.

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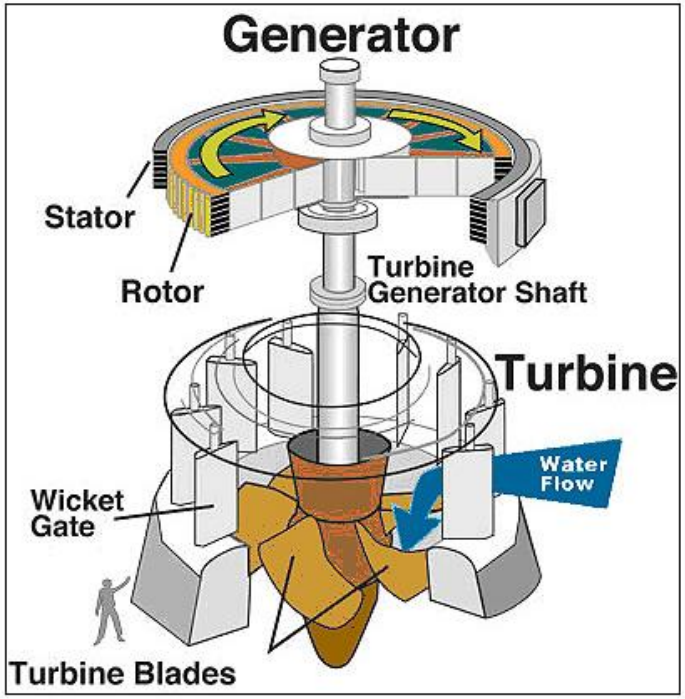
Generate and answer

When preparing for exams, students generate their own questions and then practice answering them.

This makes learners think explicitly about the underlying structures of assessment, as well as the material which they are being asked to manipulate. Form as well as function!



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Devising questions

Devise questions that –

- Challenge common misconceptions
- Create conflict that requires discussion
- Explore ambiguity and encourage discussion and clarification

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Student mark-scheme

Ask students to produce their own mark-schemes working individually or in groups. They can then peer- or self-assess work in accordance with these schemes.

Talk about the purpose of a mark-scheme with students – judgement, communication, standardisation etc.

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Group answers

Students work in small groups to agree on answers – when tests are returned or in other situations.

The process of agreeing should include reasoning over the validity of the consensus answer, as well as reasoned negation of misconceptions or wrong answers.

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Comment-only marking

Comment-only marking provides students with a focus for progression instead of a reward or punishment for their ego (as a grade does).

Comments could be made in books, in a table at the front of books, in a learning diary or journal. The latter are helpful for teacher and student to track the progression of comments and see improvement.

Comments should make it clear how the student can improve.

Plan activities and work with feedback in mind – let the design assist the process.

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Mid-unit assessment

Having an assessment at the end of a unit may not provide time for you to go over areas students have struggled with, or in which there are general misconceptions.

Timing assessment during a unit (i.e. lesson 5 of 7) allows time to review, reflect and revisit.

It also gives the teacher an opportunity to focus explicitly on areas of weak understanding supported by evidence.

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‘Might’

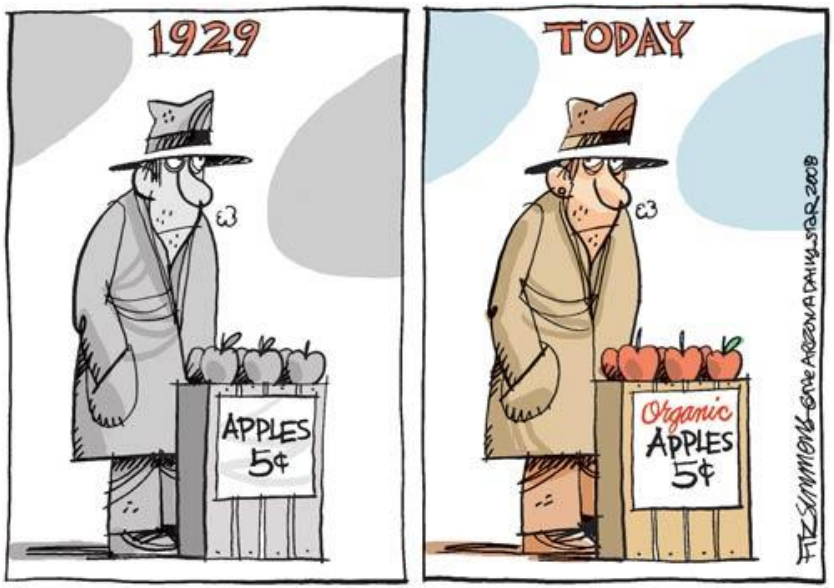
When questioning, insert the word ‘might’ to give students greater opportunity to think and explore possible answers.

e.g.

What is the meaning of democracy?

What might the meaning of democracy be?

The first infers a single answer known by the teacher whereas the second is inherently more open.



What might the Great Depression look like today?

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Wait-time

Wait time allows students time to think and therefore to produce answers. Also, not everyone in the class thinks at the same speed or in the same way – waiting allows students to build their thoughts and explore what has been asked.

2 types of wait time –

i) Teacher speaks and then waits before taking student responses.

ii) Student response ends and then teacher waits before responding. This gives the student space to elaborate or continue – or for another student to respond.

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Open vs closed

Closed questions can be useful however are not great at facilitating the use of abstract thinking skills, encouraging talking or eliciting much understanding. Open questions are more likely to do this and thus improve learning.

e.g.

Did you go out last night?

What did you after the session yesterday?

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Exemplar work

When setting students a piece of work, show them examples that make it clear what it is they are being asked to do – and what they need to do in order to meet the assessment criteria.

Students could mark exemplar work using the assessment criteria. This will help model what is being asked for and how it relates to the process of assessment.

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Student marking

By taking part in the process of assessment, students gain a deeper understanding of topics, the process of assessment and what they are doing in their own work. This helps to make them more aware of ‘what learning is’ and thus see their own learning in this way.

Students could self- or peer- mark homework or assessments.

This could be done in pairs or individually with a student-made or ‘official’ mark-scheme.

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Making aims clear

- Put lesson objectives on the board at the beginning of the lesson.
- Talk to students about why they are studying what they are studying.
- Contextualise short-term aims in long-term aims (e.g. analysing Shakespeare will contribute to a wider knowledge of the cultural canon and stronger analytical skills among other long term aims)
- Check with students that they are clear about the aims of the lesson/unit/subject
- Produce aims in conjunction with students

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Session target setting

Make the session more purposeful for students by setting targets at the beginning about what you and the class are going to do.

These can be referred to through the session and/or revisited in the plenary.

Students could have to show how they have met targets in the plenary and/or set targets for next session.

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Teacher review

The teacher leads the review of the session or unit using questioning to elicit understanding from students.

Focus could also fall upon the effectiveness of the session at facilitating learning – i.e. can students think of ways that it could be altered to improve their learning?

The teacher could model review by evaluating the session in relation to their own objectives.

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Student review

Students review their own learning either in groups or individually. This could be done as a plenary, a mini-plenary or as an activity to help planning for future revision or the remainder of the module.

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Self-assessment targets

Students give themselves targets based on their self-assessment.

These learning goals could be recorded somewhere and revisited (on Moodle?)

They could be compared to teacher targets and the two brought to consensus if different.

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2 stars and a wish

For peer assessment, ask students to give two stars and a wish.

Two stars = 2 things that are good about the piece of work

A wish = something they can improve to make it even better

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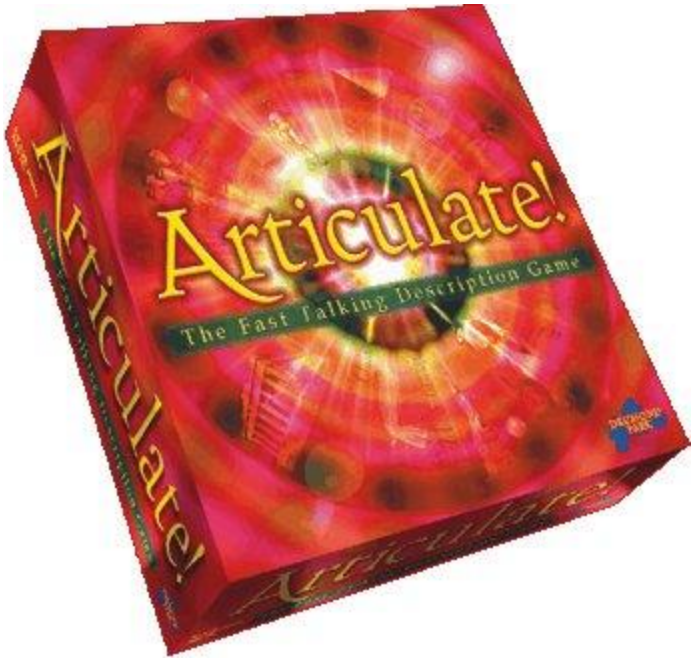
Articulate then answer

Give students the opportunity to articulate their thinking before answering –

- 30 seconds silent thinking before any answers
- Brainstorm in pairs first for 2-3 minutes
- Write some thoughts down before answering
- Discuss with your neighbour first



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Tell your neighbour

Students ‘tell their neighbour’ as a means of articulating their thoughts.

- Ask a question, give thinking time and then ask students to tell their neighbour their thoughts.

- Tell students what the new topic is and then ask them to tell their neighbour everything they know about it.

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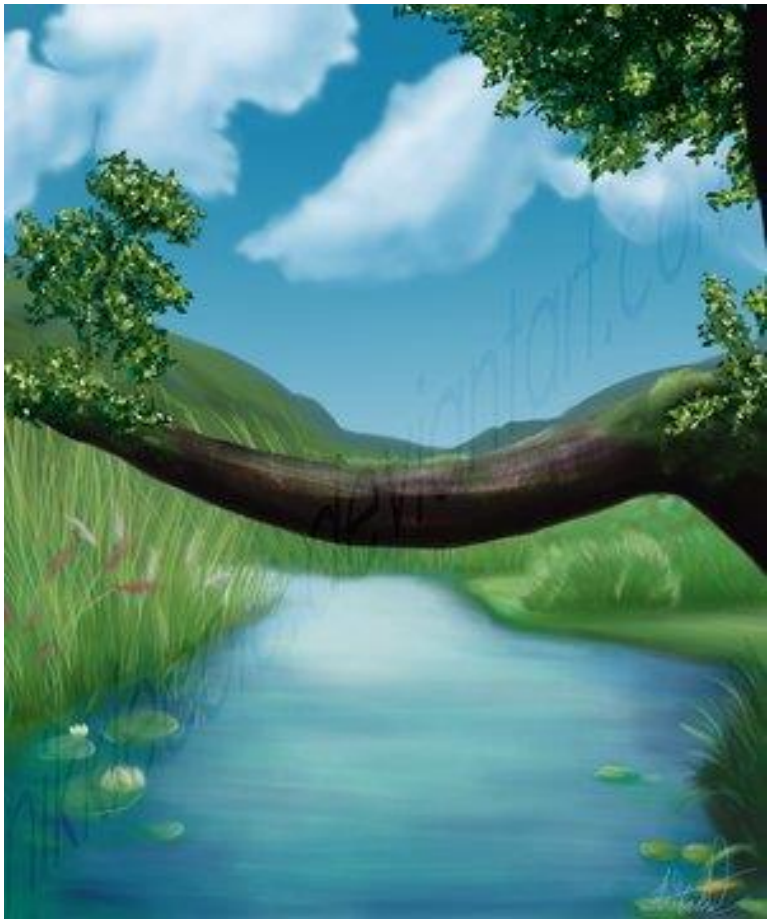
Scene-setting

Set the scene for the lesson by using a big, open question or problem-solving task that requires abstract thinking skills. Anticipate responses and follow-up so as to work these through.

E.g. A session on the Vietnam War could begin with the question –

Do Americans think they fight wars, or win them?



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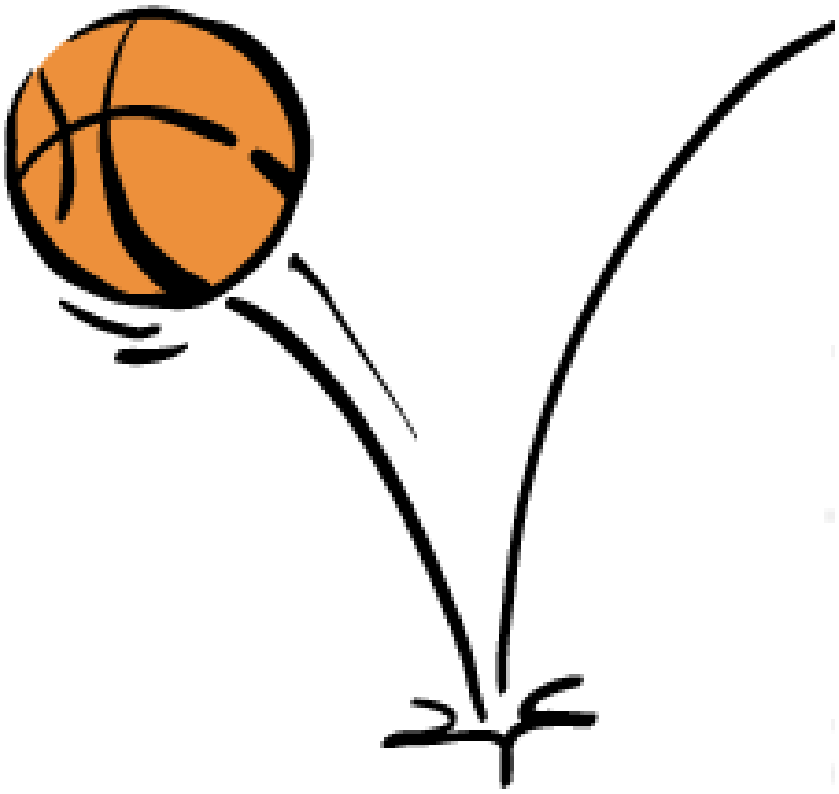
Bouncing

Bounce answers around the room to build on understanding and have students develop stronger reasoning out of misconceptions.

E.g.
“Jimmy, what do you think of Sandra’s answer?”

“Sandra, how could you develop Carl’s answer to include more detail?”

“Carl, how might you combine all we’ve heard into a single answer?”



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Idea thoughts

When you have received an answer to a question, open up the thinking behind it by asking what others think about the idea.

e.g. “What do others think about _____’s idea?”

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Wait and recap

Wait for students to draw out most of the key words you are asking for and then reframe the question – asking for a synthesis which recaps the whole discussion by joining all these words into a single coherent answer, paragraph etc.

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Incorrect discussion

Use incorrect answers as a discussion point.

Rather then dismissing something because it is wrong, or saying ‘that’s interesting’ etc. Use the misconception in reasoning to draw the process out into the open.

This leads to improving on misconceived reasoning and an atmosphere in which it is OK to be Wrong.

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Learning journal

Create a learning journal in which students can reflect on and review their learning. It could include plenary activities, a target setting chart, aims and goals etc.

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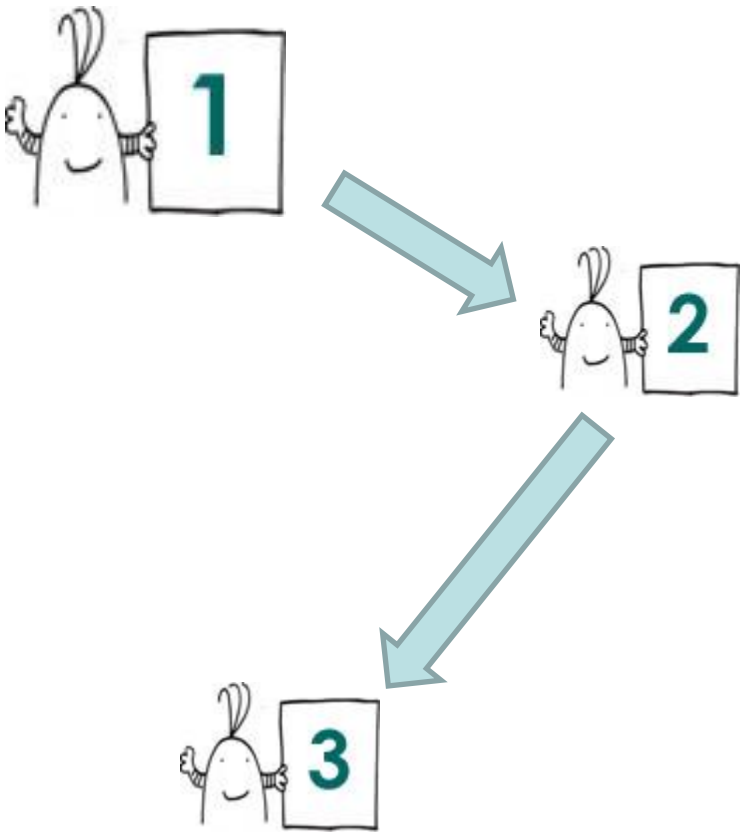
Redrafting

Use session time to redraft work.

This allows students time to focus on the feedback for improvement they have been given.

It also reinforces the value of the feedback and allows them to work at it in a supportive environment.



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Key features

When designing written tasks to go alongside oral work, intend for them to develop and show understanding of the key features of what students have learned.

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Improvement guidance

When making comments on students' work, treat them like guidance showing how the student can improve.

Develop this by asking students to write in the same way when peer assessing work.

Discuss the notion of guidance and how it differs from other types of behaviour (i.e. prescription, admonishment etc.)

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Comment follow-up

Give students opportunities to follow up comments -

- Create time in the session to talk to individual students.
- Have a written dialogue in the students' book.
- Use a comment tracker or targets sheet to formalise the dialogue.

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Group feedback

Group feedback to a teacher concerning peer-assessment of work can help make the teacher aware of learning needs in a manageable way.

If a group feeds back then it draws more attention and presents information that has already been ordered and sorted (meaning less repetition for the teacher).

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Peer marking

Students mark each others' work according to assessment criteria.

Encourages reflection and thought about the learning as well as allowing students to see model work and reason past misconceptions.

Opportunities to do this throughout individual lessons and schemes of work.

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Thumbs

Check class understanding of what you are teaching by asking them to show their thumbs.

Thumbs up = I get it

Thumbs half way = sort of

Thumbs down = I don't get it

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Teach collaboration

Peer assessment requires students to act collaboratively. Indeed, AfL is a collaborative enterprise. Therefore, explicitly teach skills of collaboration.

This process can be assisted by discussing collaboration with pupils and making it visible as a part of the classroom.

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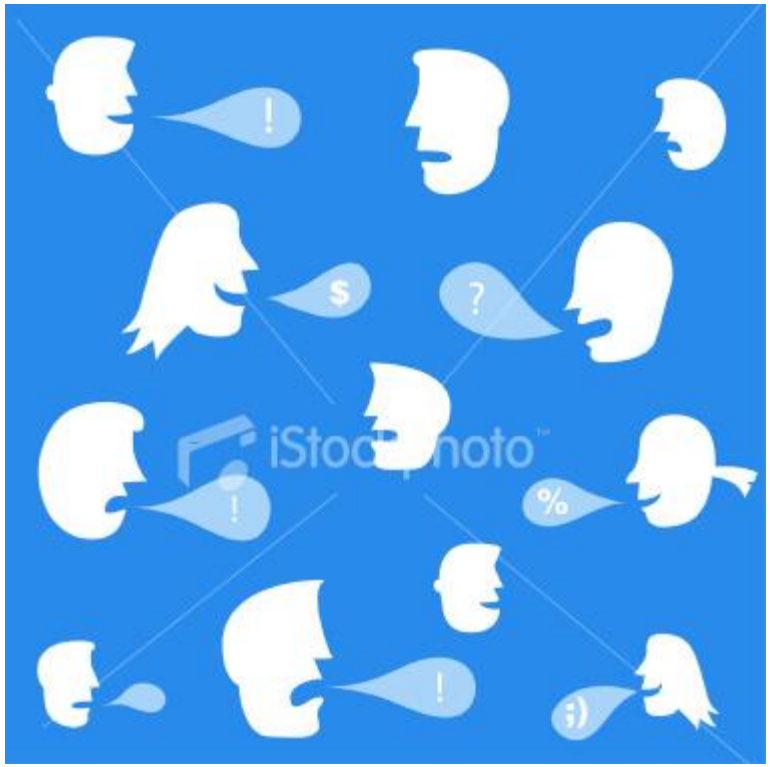
Think through talking

Talking allows students to articulate their thoughts and thus to learn.

Encourage thinking through talking with –

- Discussion activities
- Structured group/pair work
- Modelling by teacher and students

(small group work increases the ‘surface area’ of talk in the classroom as opposed to whole class discussions)



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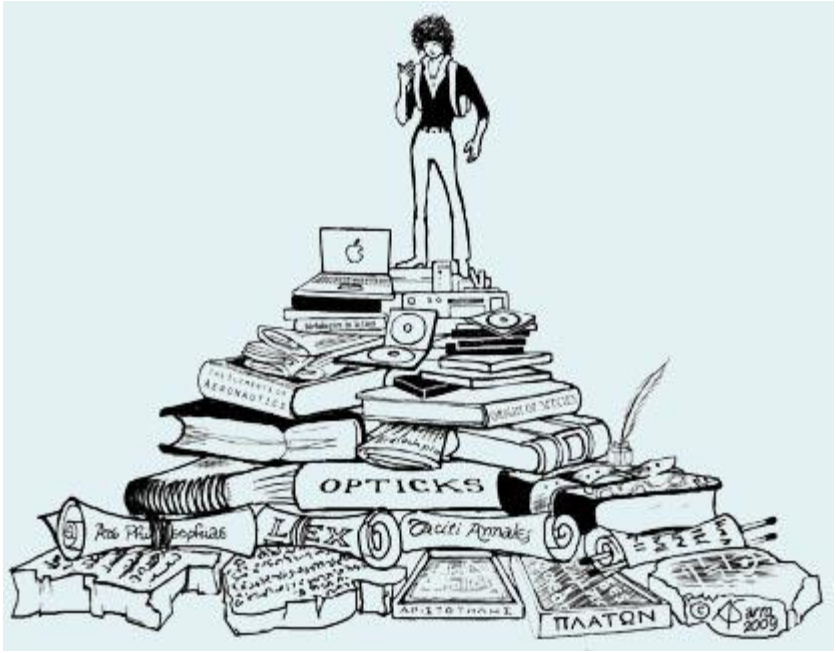
All you know

Students write down everything they know about _____ at the start of the module.

The teacher can then teach the module accordingly, using existing knowledge and avoiding repetition.



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Conveying progress

Find a means of using assessment to convey progress to students and thus make what they are doing more meaningful.

- Link learning between modules and sessions
- Use a learning journal
- Refer to past targets and highlight where the student is achieving this
- Have a target chart where it is visible how the student has progressed
- Link assessment to student goal-setting

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Communication

Ask students to communicate thinking through different mediums – not just writing; drawing, drama, maps, sculpture etc.

The medium is the message and therefore circumscribes to some extent how communication can take place. Using alternative mediums allows the teacher to ‘see’ students’ understanding from different angles.

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Thoughtful dialogue

Dialogue between teacher and students should be thoughtful, reflective, focussed to evoke and explore understanding, and conducted so that all students have an opportunity to express their ideas.

(Page 12, Inside the Black Box, Paul Black & Dylan William, nferNelson, 1998)

Discuss the quality of dialogue with students and ask them to articulate what its purpose is, why, and how (if necessary) it may be improved).

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Feedback sandwich

Feedback can be delivered in different ways, two feedback 'sandwiches' are –

i) Positive comment

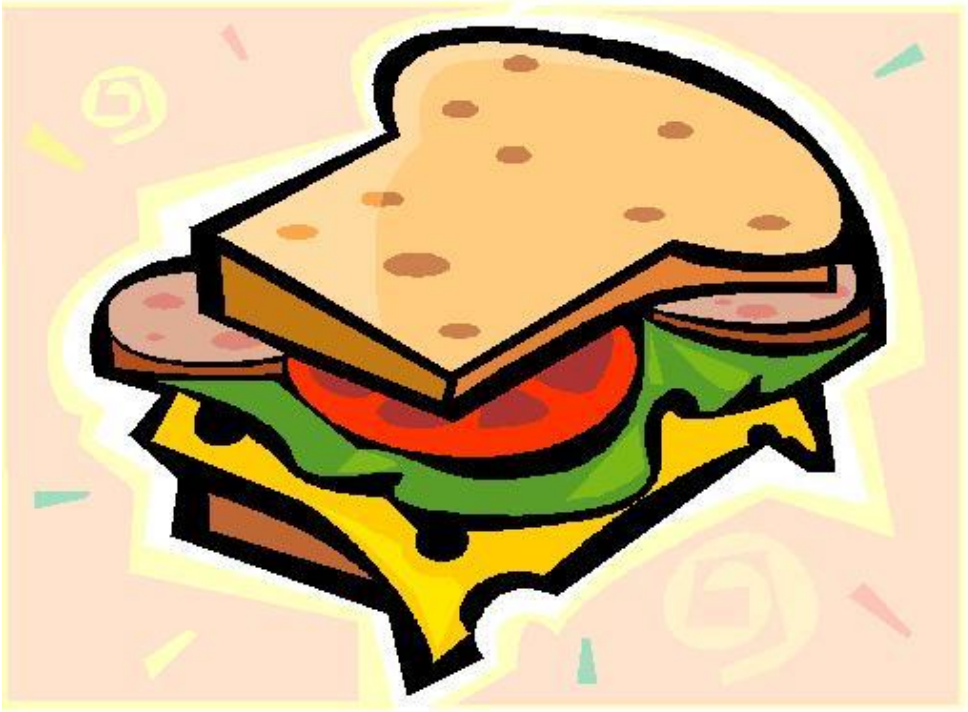
Constructive criticism with explanation of how to improve

Positive comment

ii) Contextual statement – I liked….because….

Now/Next time…

Interactive statement e.g. a question based on the work



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What is good?

Spend time ensuring that there is consensus between yourself and the pupils over what makes a piece of work ‘good’, and how they are expected to achieve it. Use questions such as –

‘Can you tell me what makes a piece of work good?’

‘How do you feel about comments?’

‘Do you always know what you need to do next/think about?’

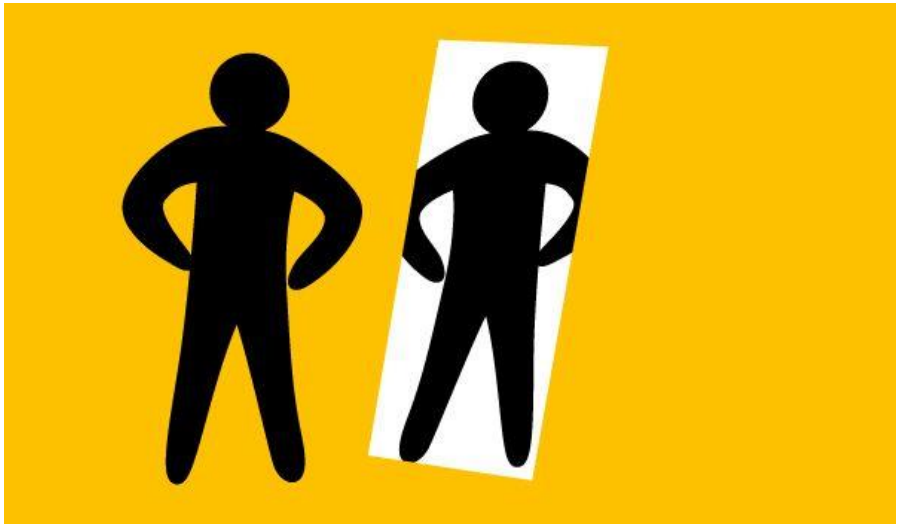
‘Do you know when you have done a ‘good’ piece of work?’

Back to AFL Tools

Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation involves learning *how* we learn, whereas self-assessment is *what* we learn. To train students in self-evaluation, use questions such as:

- Think about what has happened when the learning has taken place
- What really made you think? What did you find difficult?
- What do you need more help with?
- What are you pleased about?
- What have you learnt new about X?
- How would you change the learning activity to suit another class?



The teacher can model answers to these to show the students how to self-evaluate.

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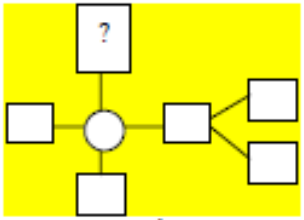
Graphic organisers

Use graphic organisers to help pupils self-assess.

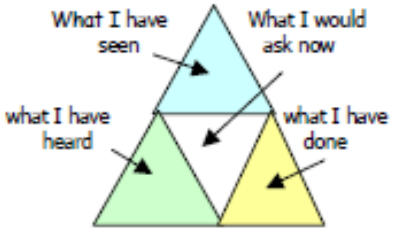
Webs



- Useful in organising ideas
- Place the major topic in centre
- Similar to "mind map" or "concept map"

It can map the learning at beginning or end of module. The pupils see the key areas which they have identified or missed. It support the development of linking ideas and elements.

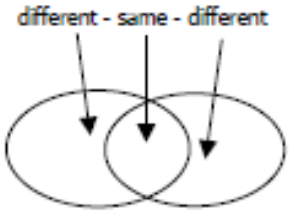
Triangles



- pupils place knowledge and feelings in different areas e.g. what I have seen, heard and done which has helped me learn
- inter-connecting senses and emotions

The organiser is used to breakdown certain types of learning. There are 4 sections to be used creatively. It can support the VAK ideas; pupils can add questions they would like to ask; it can help the pupil to think ahead to what else they would like to learn or remember to do next time

Venn diagram



- useful for comparing and contrasting
- shows interrelations between two elements

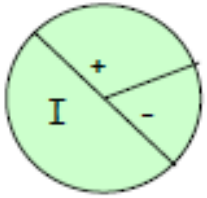
Pupils use the venn diagram to re-arrange information in order to reveal to themselves more clearly similarities and differences. In placing key information on the diagram the pupil is more likely to understand their pattern of learning

Ladder

- Useful for ranking, prioritising, identifying areas of clarity and locating unsure ground

It can help the pupil come to a decision by involving her in placing learning in a ranking order – which was most important? which have I really understood best?

PMI diagram



Pie graph for **plus, minus and interesting** elements of the work

Developed by Edward de Bono

- Encourages pupils to identify what has worked and not worked for their learning
- It can also be drawn as a table

plus	minus	interesting

All these are taken from http://www.aaia.org.uk/pdf/Publications/AAIAformat4.pdf (page 19)

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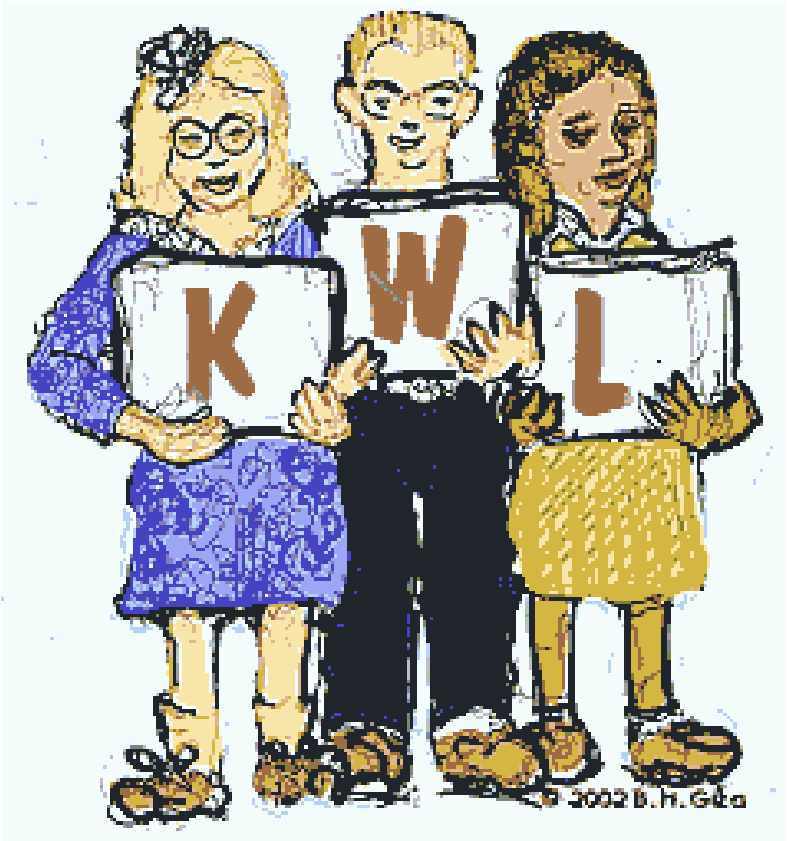
KWL

At the beginning of a topic students create a
grid with three columns –

What They Know;
What They Want To Know;
What They Have Learnt.

They begin by brainstorming and filling in the first two columns and then return to the third at the end of the module(or refer throughout) .

Variation – extra column ‘How Will I Learn’



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Talk partners

As a plenary or a starter referring to the last lesson, students share with a partner:

- 3 new things they have learnt
- What they found easy
- What they found difficult
- Something they would like to learn in the future

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Post-It

Use post-it notes to evaluate learning. Groups, pairs or individuals can answer:

- What have I learnt?
- What have I found easy?
- What have I found difficult?
- What do I want to know now?

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Response partners

Paired or partnership oral marking. Students invite a partner or a group to discuss or comment on their work.

For it to be effective, students should be aware of learning objectives and success criteria. They should also appreciate the role of a response partner – to offer positive and constructive feedback around the learning goals.

Students could be given prompt questions to ask the person who has done the work.

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Hands down

Tell students they should only raise their hand to ask a question, not to answer one. The teacher then chooses students to answer, therefore gaining information on whether everyone is learning.

www.classtools.net – fruit machine programme on here where you can input names, save it and play it to choose students at random.

Write names on lollipop sticks and pull out at random to answer.

Write numbers on balls or counters that tally to register or seating position and re-use with every class.

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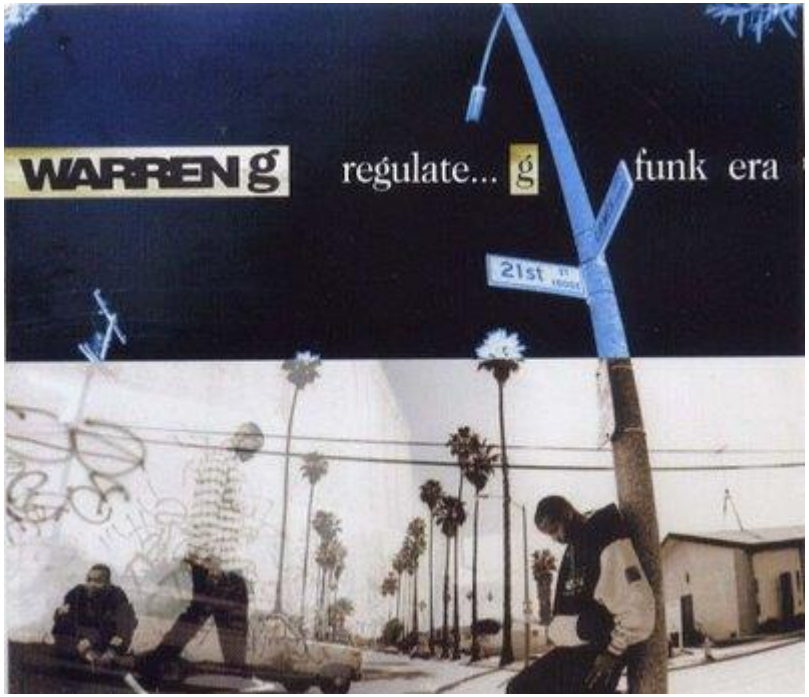
Regulating learning

Circulating through the room whilst students are engaged in an activity means the teacher can collect information on learning, employ different assessment strategies and intervene where appropriate.



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A B C D

Laminate a set of cards so every member of the class has four, with A,B,C and D written on them. Ask questions with four answers and pupils can show you their answer.

Encourage them not to look at other people's response so as to copy.

Back to AFL Tools

Why is it best?

Ask students to find
their best piece of work and then to tell you why it is their best. This explanation could refer to success criteria, targets etc.

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Active students

Key to AfL is students being active, engaged participants in their learning. Think of ways in which content can be manipulated for these ends, rather than the other way round.

If the content seems boring then make the approach fun or interesting.

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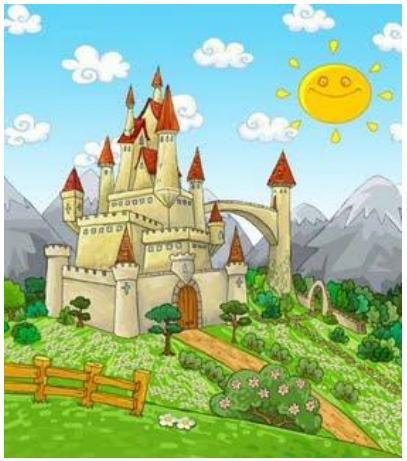
Long and short term

To draw together progression with the big picture, students could set both long and short term targets.

The short term targets could be reviewed weekly or fortnightly and the long term targets at the end of term.

Having a long term target may give more cogency to the pupil's and teacher's short term targets. It may also allow the pupil to focus on what Really motivates them about a subject.



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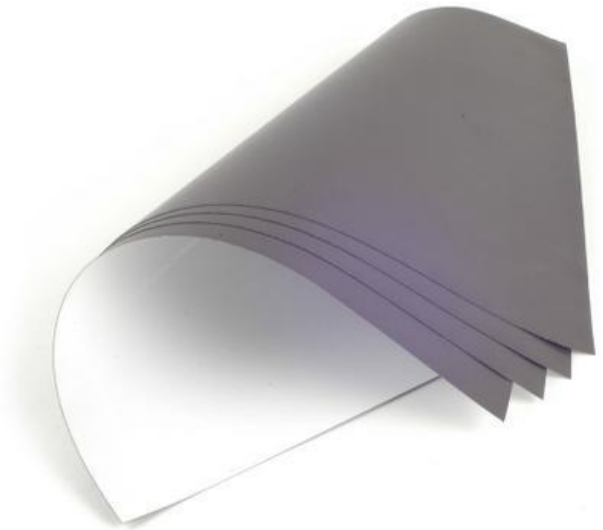
Minute paper

Students identify the most significant (useful, meaningful, unlikely) thing they have learnt during the session or module.



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Enquiry Question

Use an enquiry question to stimulate high-level thinking in the session or module.

e.g.

How democratic is the United Kingdom?

Why is our university so ethnically diverse?

What is enquiry-based learning - http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/ceebl/ebl/

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Muddiest Point

Students write down one or two points on which they are least clear. This could be from the previous lesson, the rest of the unit, the preceding activity etc. The teacher and class can then seek to remedy the muddiness.

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One-sentence summary

Students write a sentence summarising their knowledge of a topic.

The sentence could have to include who, what when, why, how, where etc.

The sentences could then be peer-assessed, re-drafted and so on.