

The Differentiation Deviser



80 ways to differentiate, for use across
the curriculum and the Key Stages.

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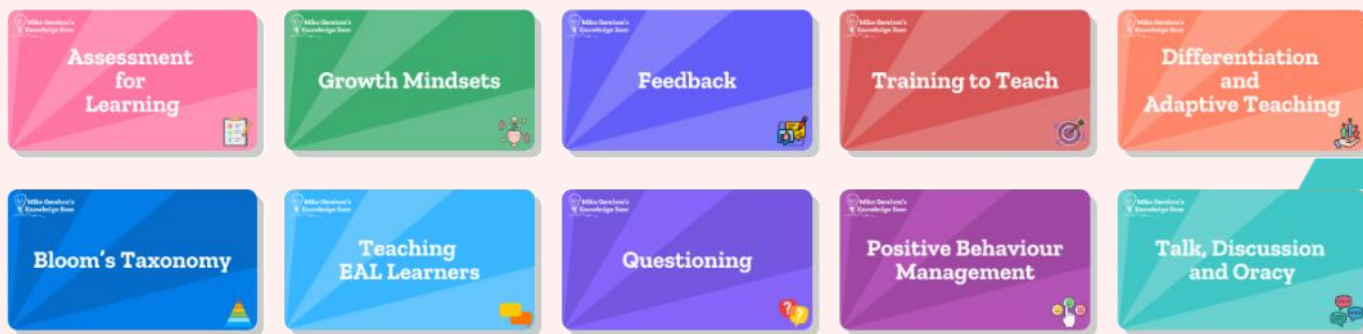


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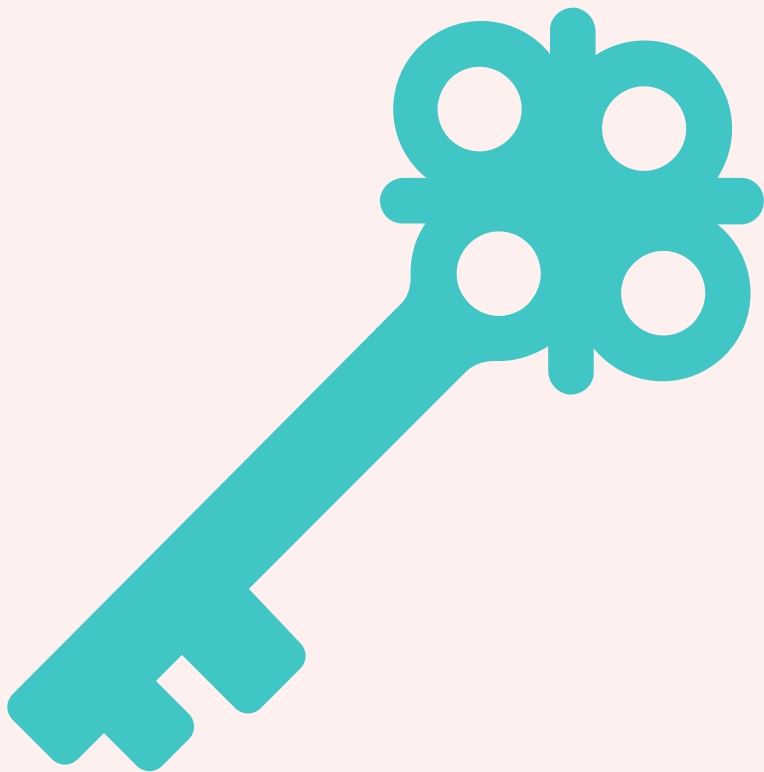
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Keywords



Language is integral to learning. Keywords are those words that are central to the topic you are teaching. Differentiate by:

- Providing learners with a glossary of keywords.
- Providing a list of keywords and definitions that will be appropriate for the lesson.
- Providing a list of keywords and examples of how to use them in a sentence.

Simple Language



The more complex the language you use, the less likely all your learners will be able to access the meaning.

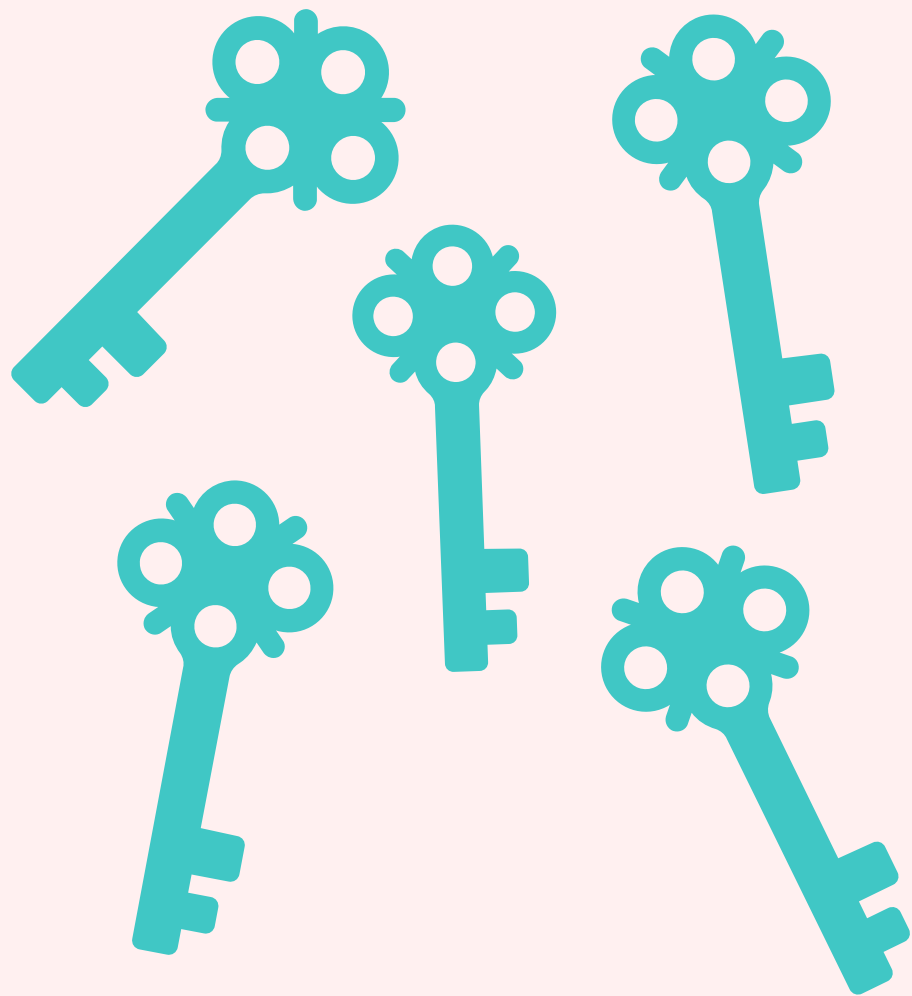
Differentiate by simplifying your language.

Consider the different places you might do this:

- When speaking to the whole class.
- When speaking to individuals
- When writing comments.
- On PowerPoints or IWB slides.
- On hand-outs.

Simplifying does not mean dumbing down. It means making things clear and easy to understand.

Keyword Display

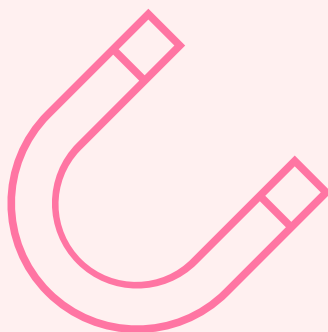
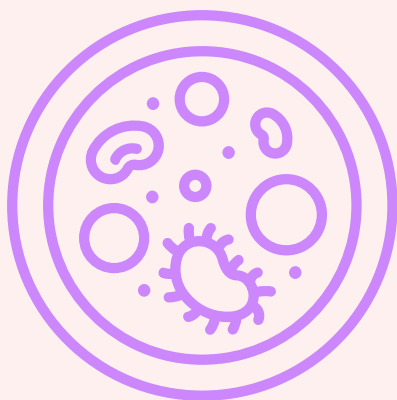
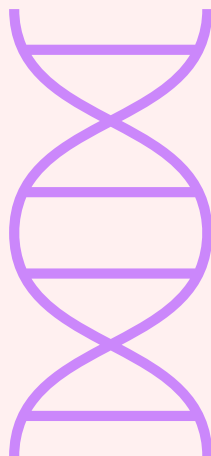
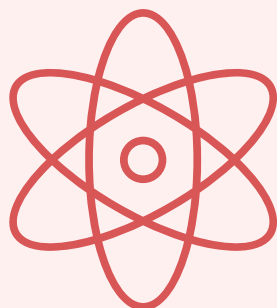
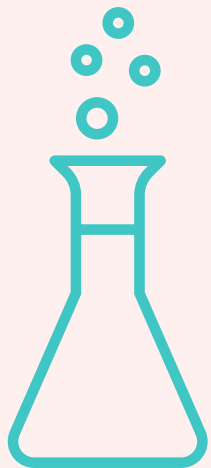


A good way to help learners get to grips with keywords is to display them in your room.

Here are five ways you can do this:

- A list of keywords and definitions.
- Keywords accompanied by relevant images.
- Sentences in which the keywords are being used.
- Keywords in a table with synonyms and antonyms.
- Get your class to make collages or posters of keywords and display these.

Images



Images help all learners to access the work.

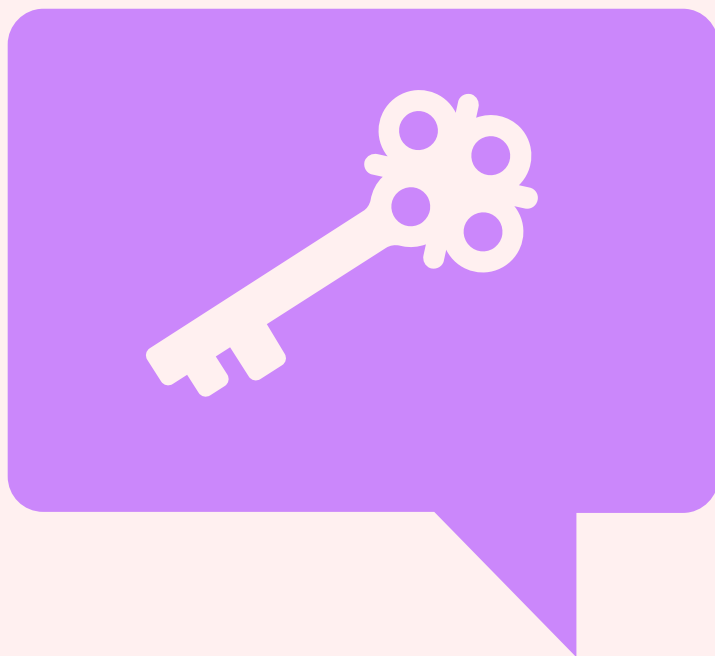
They give learners a different way of making sense of information.

Learners can use images to triangulate, helping them to decode written and verbal language.

Images are accessed and processed in a different way to speech and writing.

Differentiate by including relevant images on any resources you make.

Keyword Discussion



Before you ask learners to use new keywords in their writing, encourage them to use them in discussion.

This gives learners an opportunity to come to terms with the meaning of the words and how to use them.

Mistakes made in speech are easier to learn from and quicker to rectify than mistakes made in writing.

They are also less damaging to the ego (not least because they disappear).

Exemplify



Giving examples is an excellent way to differentiate.

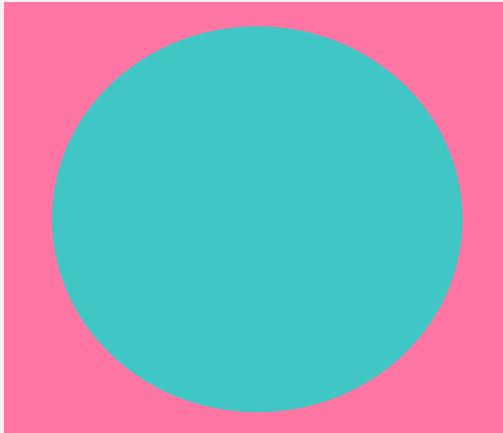
Examples give context and make things concrete.

They create connections between things that are abstract (words, concepts and ideas) and things that have some purchase to them.

Examples can take many forms but always provide the same benefits.

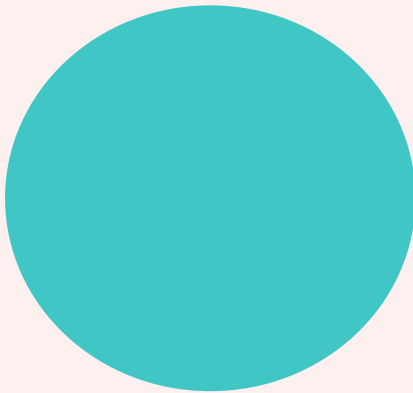
Whatever type of example you use, you will be helping learners to develop their understanding.

Keyword Context



This links to the previous slide on exemplifying.

Providing context to keywords gives learners something to grab hold of. It allows them to situate keywords within a wider framework.



Have a look at the pictures to the left. You will notice that the different context surrounding the circles affects how we see them (both are in fact identical).

Context has the same effect in relation to learners' understanding of keywords.

Antonyms

Antonyms are opposites:

An antonym of big is small.

An antonym of white is black.

An antonym of fast is slow.

When you introduce learners to new words, talk to them about the antonyms of these words.

This helps learners to understand the new words. It makes clear what the words do not mean (and therefore what it is they do mean).

Contrast aids understanding, fixing meaning in our minds.

If possible, use simple antonyms with which learners are already familiar.



Modelling Conversation



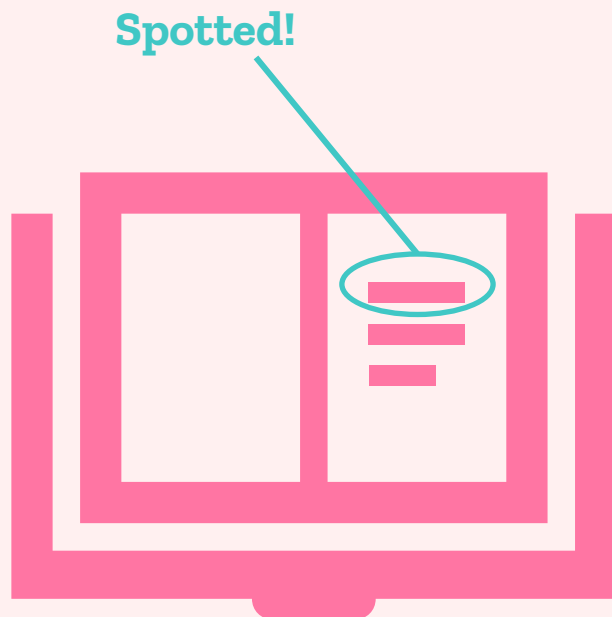
Engage a learner in conversation in front of the whole class. This could be done as part of a whole-class discussion or as part of a question-and-answer session.

Use your conversation to model how to use keywords, technical vocabulary or recently learned ideas.

You might like to choose to have your conversation with a learner who you know is already confident with the material.

Afterwards, set the class off on a discussion task that involves them using whatever it is you have modelled.

New Words



Spotted!

Make a wall display to keep track of new words.

Appoint one or more 'New-Word Spotters' whose job it is to identify when new words appear in the lesson.

They should point out these new words and add them to the wall display.

Rotate the role so that several learners are given an opportunity.

As to the wall display, you could use pieces of card pinned to the wall, a spare whiteboard, a cork board or you could print off the new words and stick them up using Blu-Tack.

Dictionary Champions



Appoint multiple Dictionary Champions.

The role can be rotated on a weekly or termly basis.

Place some dictionaries at the front of the room.

Every time a new word comes up, it is the job of the Dictionary Champions to find out what that word means and to teach it to their peers.

Each Champion should be responsible for a certain number of learners.

This ensures that all Champions have a chance to teach, and that all learners have an opportunity to learn.

Task Explanation



Think carefully about how you explain tasks in your lessons.

A generally failsafe method is as follows:

- Clear, simple instructions on the board.
- Pictures where appropriate to accompany instructions.
- Verbal explanation supplemented by modelling.

Other options include:

- Learners who understand what you are asking for explain the task to their peers.
- Share work produced by last year's learners, to model what the outcome of the task should look like.
- Provide a task checklist, either on the board or in a hand-out. Learners work through this, one item at a time.

Seating Plans



Use seating plans to differentiate by:

- Placing learners of differing abilities next to each other.
- Sitting learners next to each other where you feel one will have a positive influence on the other.
- Setting up the room so that when you go into group work, the groups you want are already sat next to or near each other.
- Placing learners with certain skills next to learners who need to develop those skills.
- Sitting learners who need additional support so they are easily accessible to you.

Hot-Seating



Hot-seating involves one of two things:

- A learner comes to the front and answers questions on the topic from the teacher and their peers.
- A learner comes to the front and answers questions on the topic in character (this being someone related to the area of study – for example, Henry VIII in a history lesson) from the teacher and their peers.

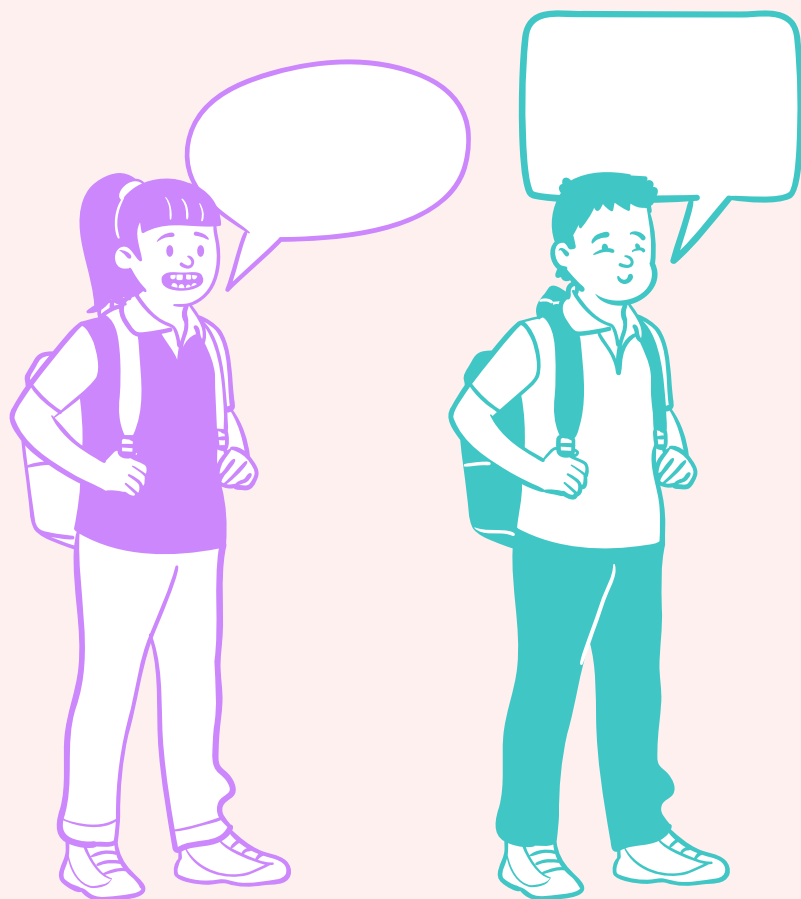
In both cases, the learner is 'in the hot-seat.'

The rest of the class can learn from the answers given by the learners who take on the hot-seat.

Learners not in the hot-seat need to devise questions they can pose to whoever is at the front of the class.

All learners are therefore able to access the task on a level that is right for them.

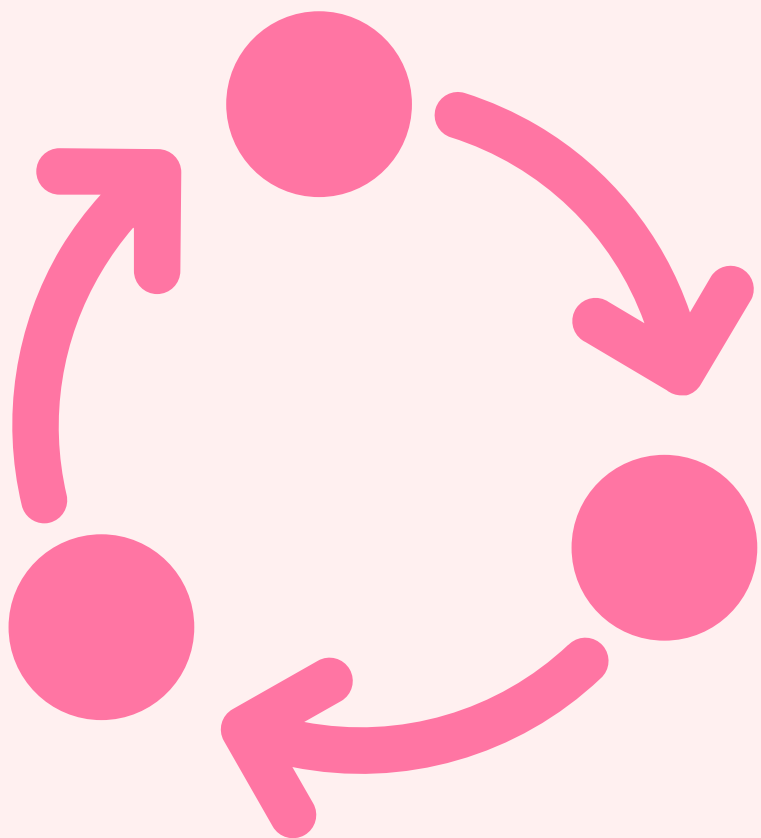
Learners Teaching



Create opportunities for learners to take over the teaching. Here are three ways you can do this:

- Ask a group of learners to create a presentation or lesson segment on part of the topic. They then deliver this to the whole class.
- Choose learners who are particularly knowledgeable about the topic. Pair each of them with a group of their peers and ask them to lead some pre-prepared activities.
- If appropriate, ask learners who have personal experience of a topic to teach the rest of the class about this (for example in Religious Studies or MFL).

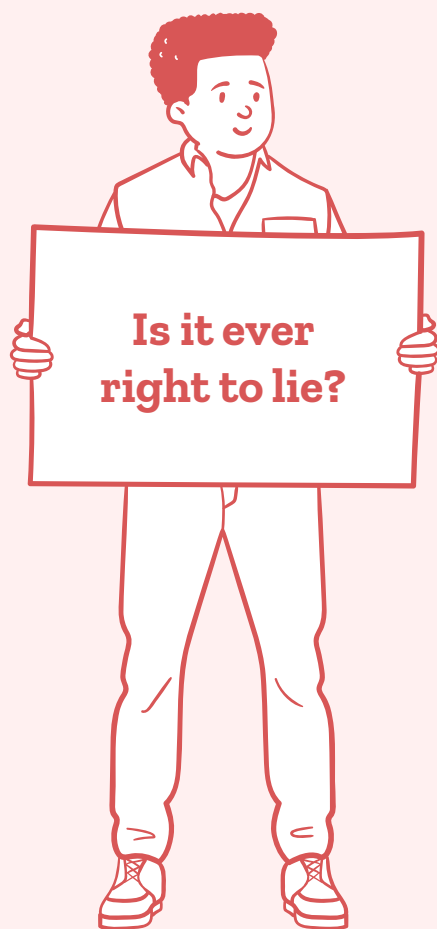
Envoys



Envoys is an activity in which learners all conduct research. Some then go off and teach while the remainder get taught. Here is how it works:

- Put the class into groups.
- Each group researches a topic.
- One person from each group then moves off around the room and teaches the other groups about their topic.
- After each group has been taught by each envoy, the envoys return to their original groups.
- Here they are informed about everything that their original group has learned.

Socratic Dialogue



Socrates was a philosopher in Ancient Greece. We know about him through the writings of Plato.

He used to engage people in philosophical conversation. This involved challenging the arguments that people put forward and the concepts and assumptions on which these were based.

A Socratic dialogue in the classroom involves the teacher talking at length with a pupil about their ideas concerning a topic.

The teacher should ask questions and offer counter-examples. The purpose is to improve the quality of the learner's arguments and to encourage them to look more critically at their ideas.

Doing this with one or two learners while the rest of the class listen is a great way to model thinking and stimulate further discussion.

Confidence Indicators



Ask learners to indicate how confident they are with the topic under consideration. Pair up learners who are confident with those who are less so.

You can then work with learners who are the least confident (and so need the most support).

Here are five ways for learners to indicate confidence levels:

- Thumbs (up, down, in the middle).
- Moving to different parts of the room.
- Traffic-light cards (red, orange, green).
- On exit passes (make sure they write their names).
- By telling you directly (though this takes more time).

Expert Corner



Ask for a learner who feels they are an expert in the topic of study.

This learner sits in a corner of the room.

You should give them their own table and two chairs (one for them, one for the learners who go up to them).

Set the class a task. Explain that if anyone has any questions or concerns, they should head over to Expert's Corner for help.

You can develop the technique by having two or three experts in different parts of the room.

Helpers



If you have learners who finish their work before the rest of the class, ask them to stand up, walk around, and help their peers.

As more learners finish, so you can create more helpers.

Eventually, you will have roughly half the class walking around and helping people, while the other half get help where they need it.

Indicate that helpers can take their work with them if they wish and use it as a tool when they are teaching their peers.

Model Answers

Present your learners with model answers to show them what it is that you, or the examiners, are looking for (depending on the age group you teach).

Two of the biggest benefits of model answers are:

- They minimise ambiguity. This is because they demonstrate to learners what it is that is being requested by a question or task. This gives learners more confidence in what they are doing.
- They provide a model! The expectation is not that learners will copy, but that they will see how it is they need to go about answering or responding to something.

Photocopy Good Work



Through the year, photocopy work that learners produce that is particularly good.

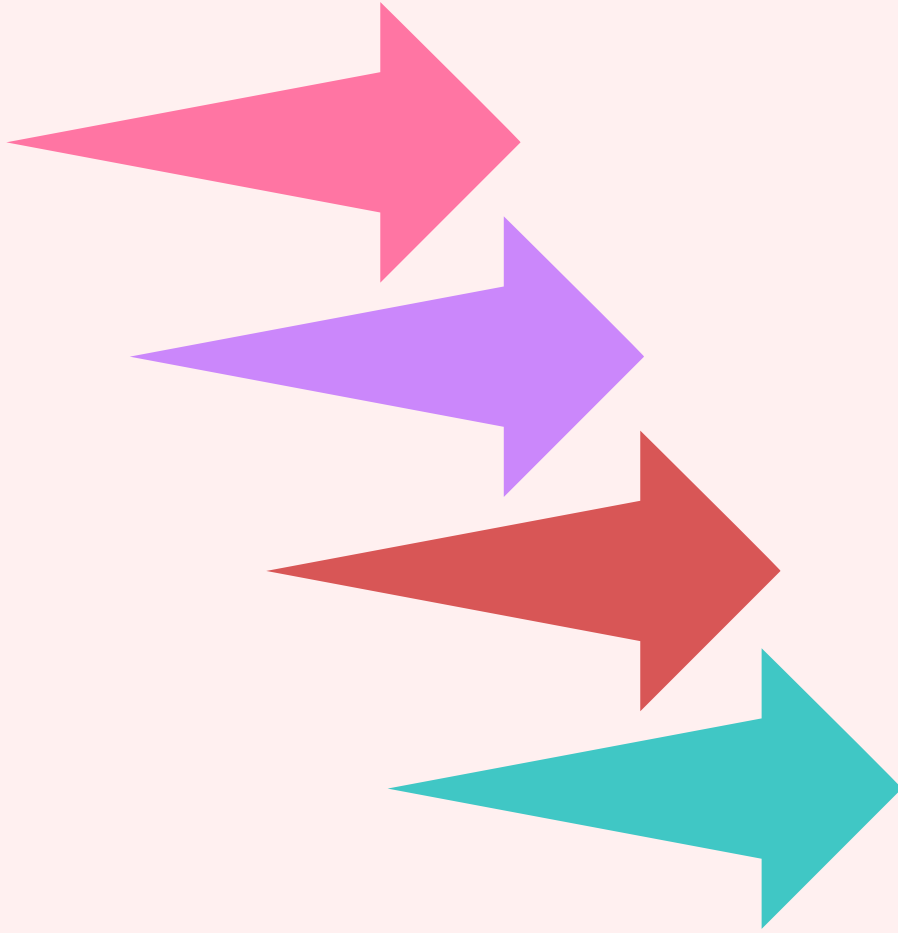
Keep this work and show it to your future learners.

The work can act as a guide, a model or a demonstration.

You might judge work as being particularly good because:

- It is highly creative.
- It shows original or innovative thinking.
- It achieves high or full marks.
- It answers the question or completes the task as was intended.
- It is perceptive.

Differentiate by Outcome



Plan tasks that can be accessed in different ways.

This means learners can deal with the tasks at a level that they feel they can access (and thus feel happy with).

Such tasks result in differentiation by outcome.

The model can be summarised as follows:

- Create tasks that all learners can do, but which are sufficiently open for them to do them to the best of their own ability.

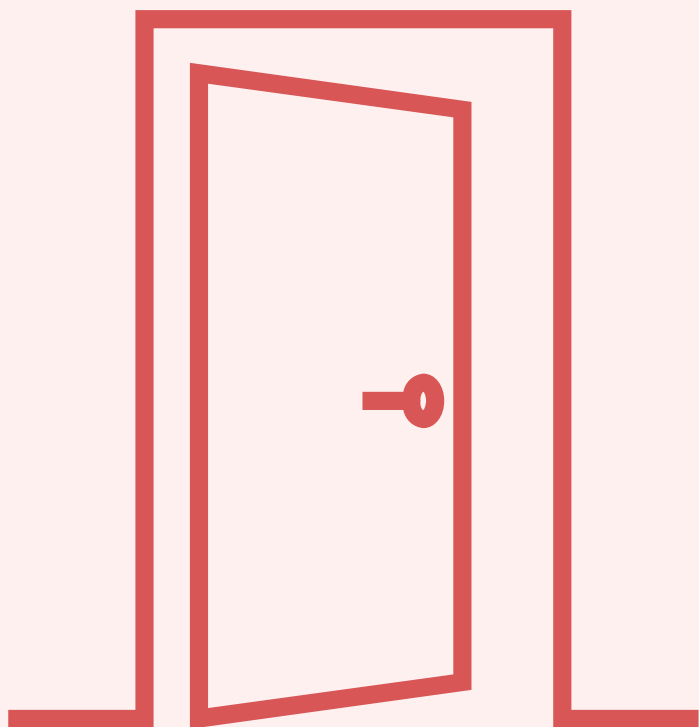
The key is to avoid tasks that demand a very specific response.

A final thought would be: 'Leave space in tasks for learners to manoeuvre.'

Open Activities

Open activities are those in which the teacher sets the guidelines but then leaves it for learners to decide how to go about meeting them. Here are some examples:

- 'Here is a list of the things you must do. It is up to you how you go about doing them. The only rule is that you must be able to demonstrate your work to me.'
- Provides learners with a question or statement and ask them to respond in a way they see fit (you might like to provide some ideas in case they get stuck).
- Tell learners where they should be at the end of the lesson and then invite them to work out their own way of getting there (you will need to provide support to the weakest learners).



Prior Knowledge



Elicit and use learners' prior knowledge.

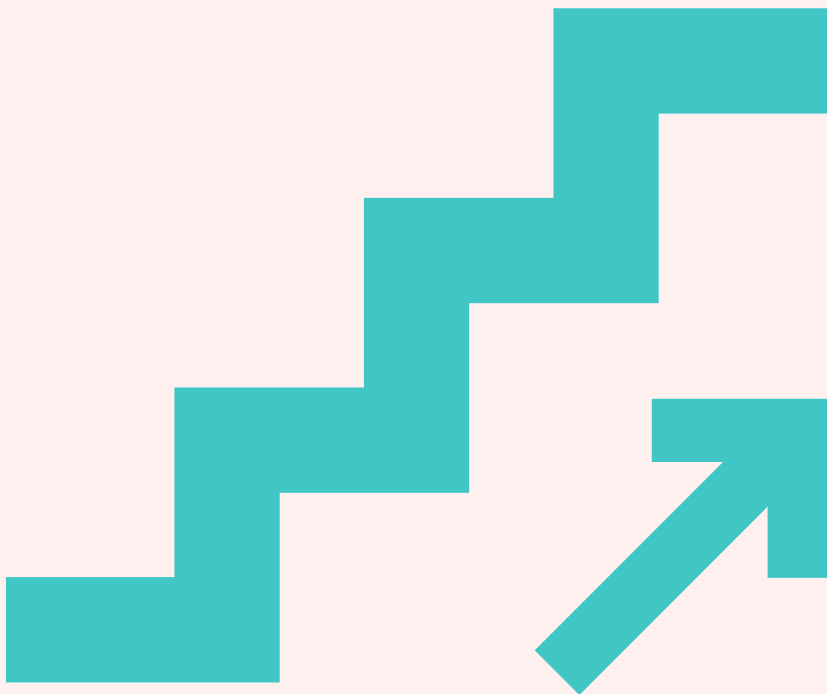
This will help you to know where learners are at. It will also help them to connect your lesson to what they already know.

Try to use and elicit prior knowledge in the starter activity where possible.

This will help learners feel comfortable in the lesson from the beginning. It will also put you in a strong position.

It is also good to elicit prior knowledge when you are introducing something new. Doing this helps learners to contextualise the new information in light of their existing knowledge – which is a form of scaffolding.

Stepped Activities



Stepped activities take learners on a learning journey that gets progressively more challenging.

Plan for your lessons to include tasks that get increasingly complex or which require increasingly sophisticated thinking.

It is not necessary for all learners to reach the top of the steps. Encourage them to keep working upwards, but if some reach a point that is causing them problems, let them stop there and work through it.

You can build your stepped activities around Bloom's Taxonomy.

See my Bloom's Taxonomy Knowledge Base for help.

Options

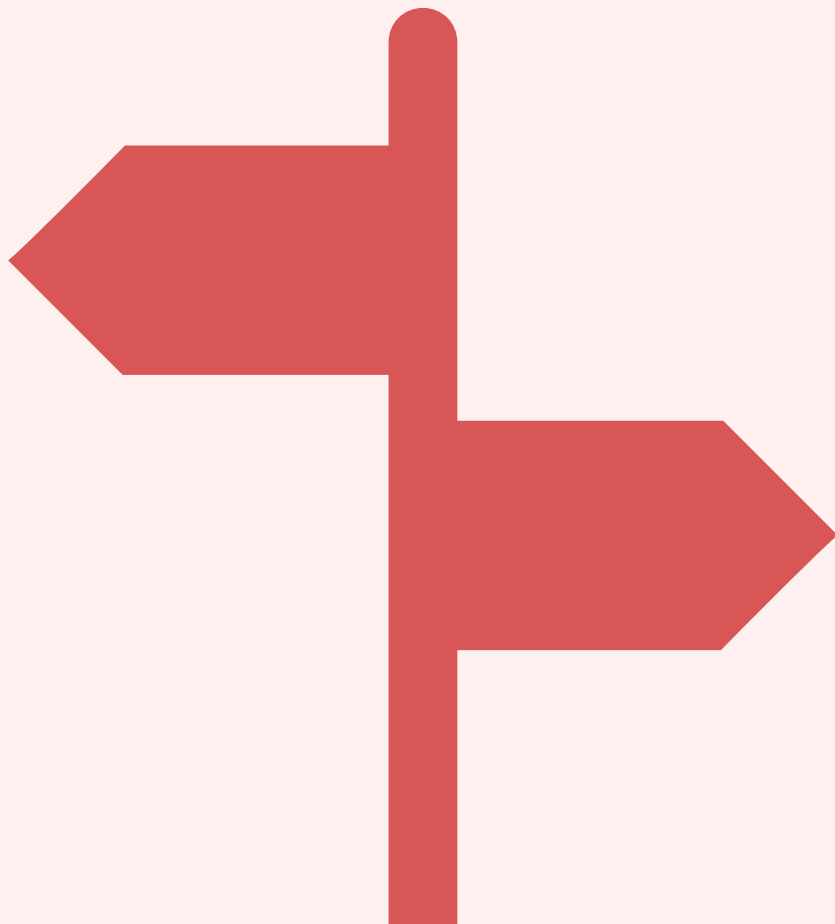
Provide learners with a range of options as to how they might access a task.

For example:

Set learners two questions they must answer and then provide them with a range of options to select from:

- Write an essay.
- Create a cartoon strip.
- Make a poster advertising your answer.
- Write a poem.
- Develop a short drama piece.
- Draft a speech in which you put forward your point of view.
- Create a song inspired by one of the questions.

Choices



Give learners a range of questions or tasks and ask them to pick which ones they will deal with and in which order.

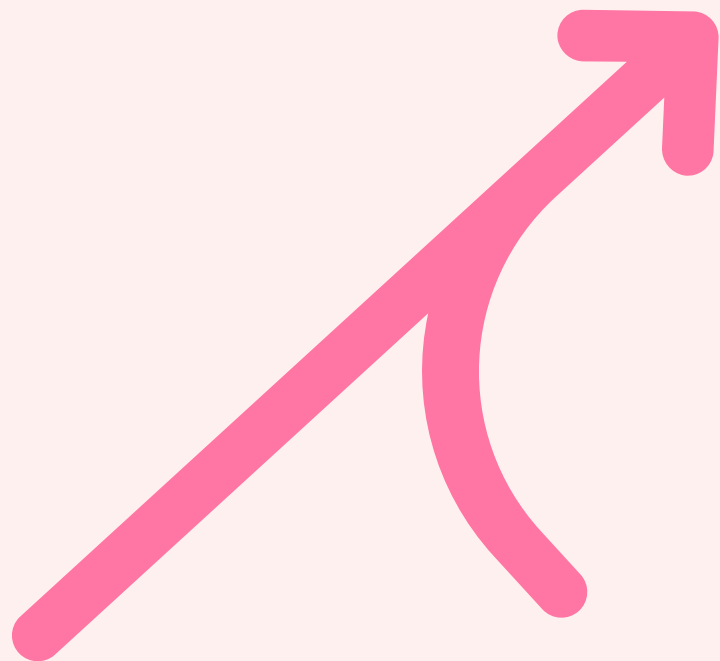
The questions and tasks should be of varying levels of difficulty.

Decide in advance if you want to order them according to their difficulty level.

If you do, it will make it easier for learners to judge which are harder and which are easier.

This could be beneficial to your pupils, or it might lead them to make choices that are below what they are capable of doing.

Extensions



Have extension questions or tasks ready for pupils who complete the work.

My preferred option is to have extension questions on all my PowerPoint slides.

In addition, I create super-extensions, hyper-extensions and even outer-space-extensions for learners who finish these.

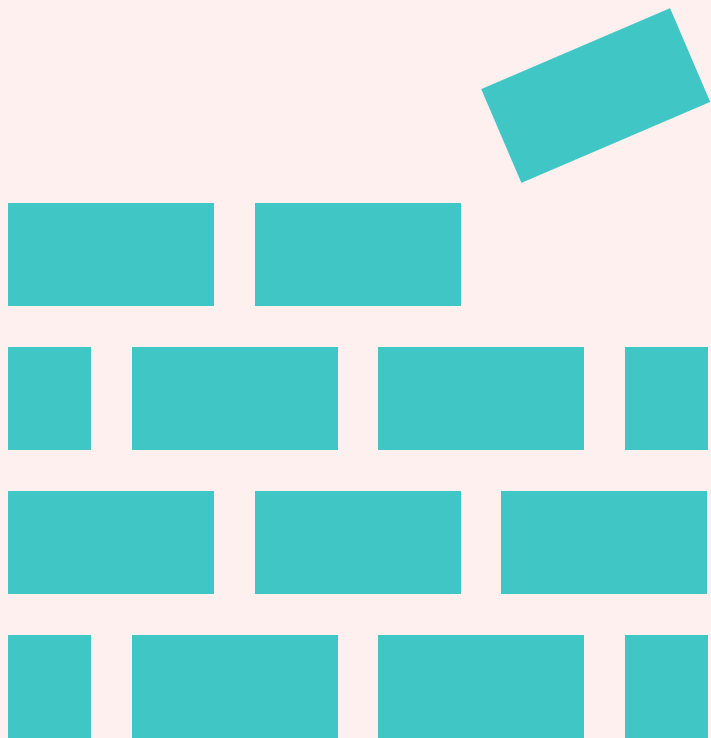
Use the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to create your extension questions and tasks.

Or try using the 'What if ...' question stem to get learners speculating and thinking creatively.

Wonder Wall

I saw a friend of mine using this technique in his classroom. It works as follow:

- Create a space on your classroom wall called the 'Wonder Wall'. You might like to make this look like a wall by chalking bricks onto black paper.
- When learners think of questions and there is not enough time to explore these, ask them to write them down on a Post-It note and to stick this on the Wonder Wall.
- When learners finish a task before their peers, ask them to fetch a question from the 'Wonder Wall' and to explore it either with a partner or in writing.



Group Work



Group work lets learners talk with each other and share their understanding of the topic.

In turn, it can allow all members of a group the chance to develop their understanding. This comes through the discussion group work involves and the working-together that it entails.

Think carefully about the make-up of your groups. Mixed-ability is often best.

You might also like to allocate roles to members of the groups to ensure that everyone knows what is expected of them.

Pair Work

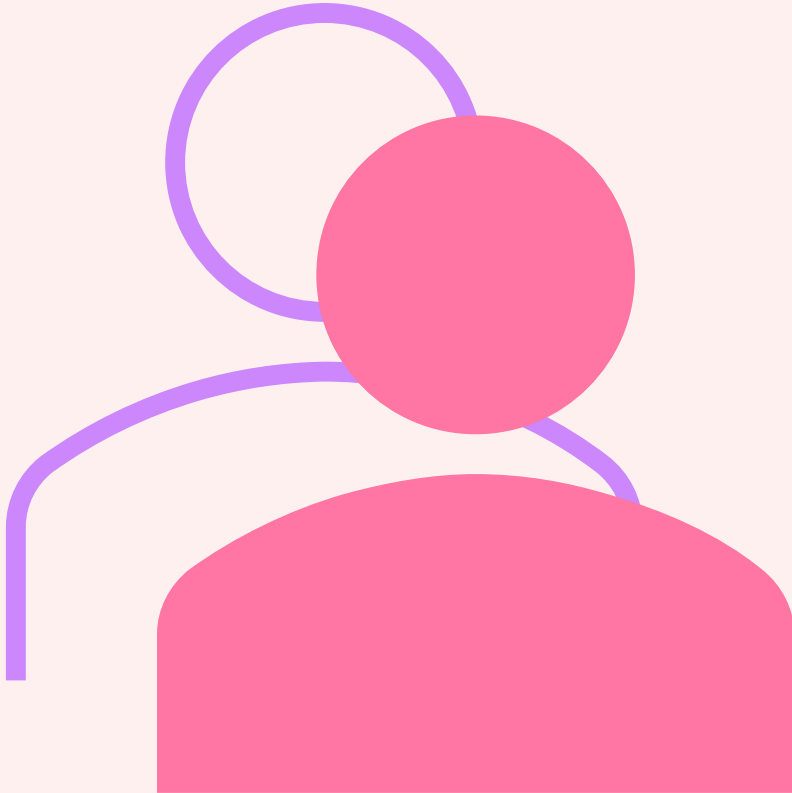
Pair work allows learners to discuss a question or task.

This helps them to develop their understanding.

You might like to pair stronger and weaker learners so the former can help the latter to access what they might find difficult on their own.

Alternatively, you might want to pair two weaker learners so that you can work with them yourself.

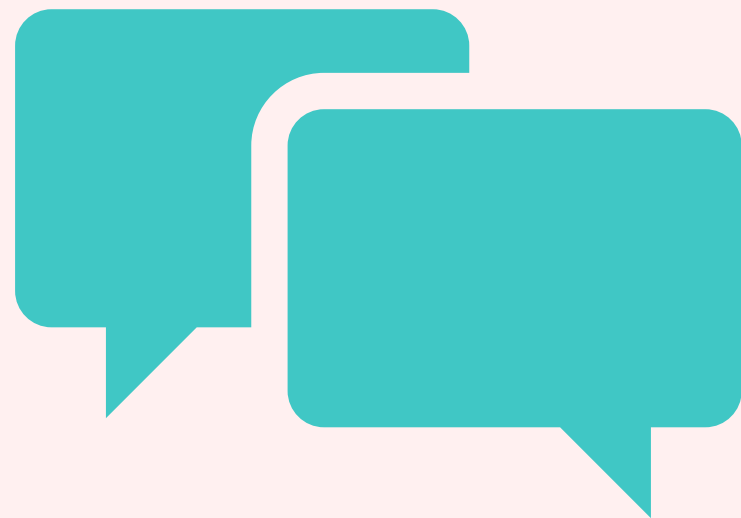
This means you can help them both make good progress.



Discussion

Discussion helps learners in the following ways (among others):

- It allows them to explore a topic or an idea and to hear what others think.
- It lets them articulate their own thoughts. This, in turn, helps them to form and refine those thoughts.
- It gives them space in which to make mistakes and to clarify meaning – this is harder to do in writing.
- It lets them take advantage of a skill that they are likely to be highly competent in (talking).
- It is an excellent precursor to writing, allowing learners to prepare and develop their thoughts before committing them to paper.



Personal Experience

Here are three ways you can use learners' personal experiences to help them to learn:

- Build tasks and questions into your lessons that ask learners to call on their own experiences.
- Demonstrate how topics covered in your lessons relate to people's everyday experiences.
- Try to find out about the experiences of your learners. If appropriate, call on these when you are teaching. You may be able to use them to make points clearer and more relevant for your learners.



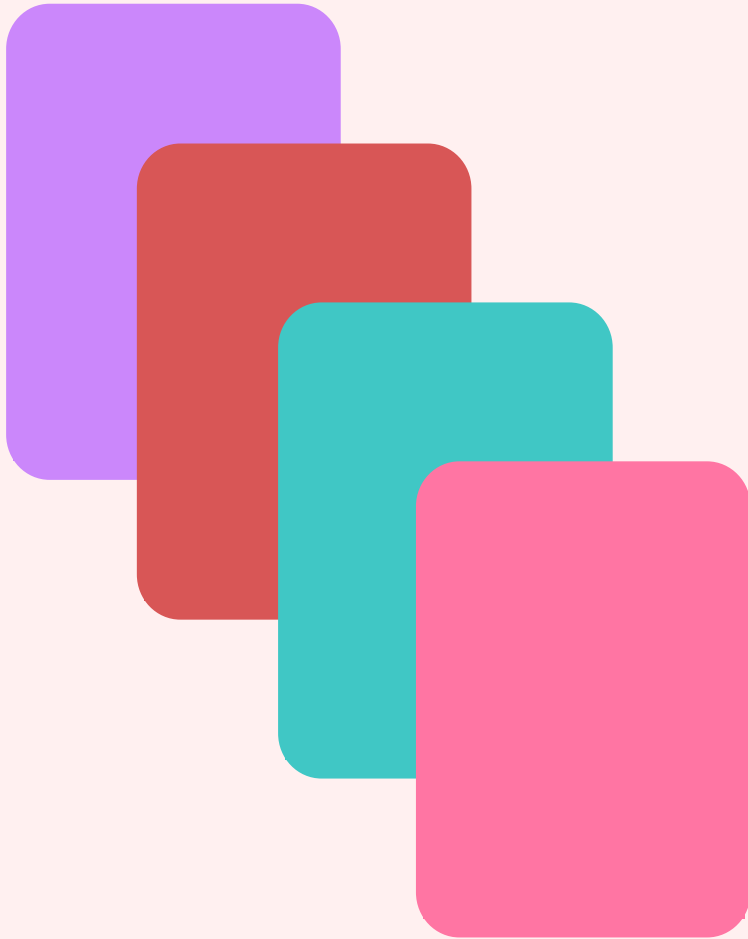
Pace Yourself

Where possible, set up lessons or segments of lessons in which learners can go at their own pace. Here are some ways of doing this:

- Make use of extensions, stepped activities, options, choices and open activities (all of which are explained in this document).
- Create a series of hand-outs that learners are to work through. When they have finished one, they come and collect the next one from you.
- Give learners a list of things they must do, a list of things they should try to do and a list of things that are 'extras.' Let them work through the lists at their own pace.



Card Sorts



Card sorts let learners sort, order and match information in a concrete way.

They make information more accessible by presenting it visibly, in a way that can be physically manipulated.

Some learners can find the parallel cognitive processes hard to cope with if they do not have something tangible to support them.

A good tip is to laminate your cards so they are harder than would otherwise be the case. This means they are less likely to get damaged and there is a better chance that you will be able to use the same ones year-after-year.

Matching, Grouping and Ranking



Matching, grouping and ranking activities are accessible to all learners.

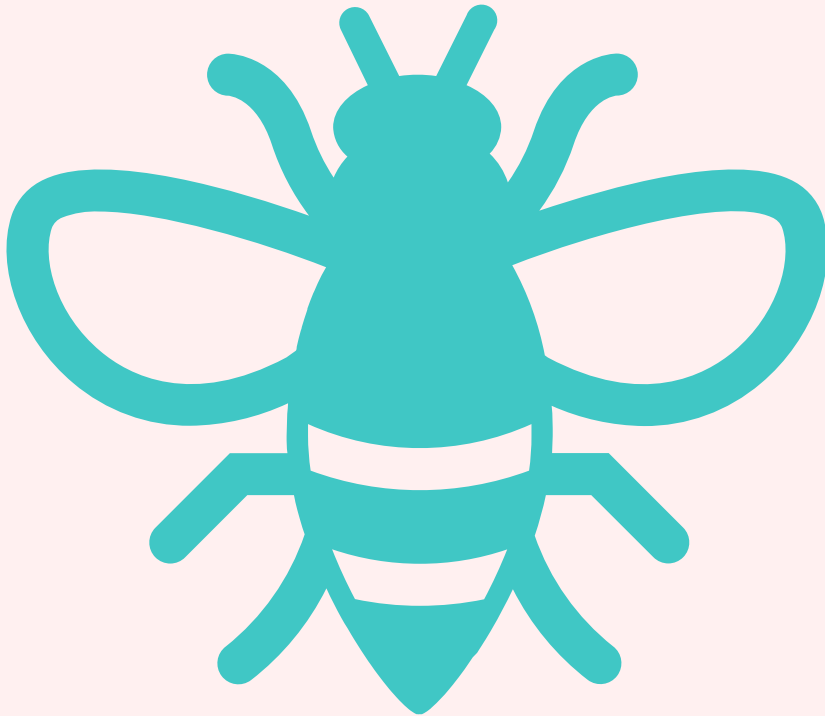
At the same time, they invite different levels of thought.

For example, a more-able learner may be able to give a detailed argument explaining their ranking of a set of items, while a less-able learner may choose instead to refer to experience and comparisons.

The three activity types also invite a close examination of ideas and items through a concrete process.

This is because the matching, grouping and ranking either involves physical materials such as cards, or the writing down and rearranging of words.

Buzz Groups



These are a different way of structuring paired discussion.

Explain to learners that, in a moment, you want them to get into their buzz groups.

This means they need to stand up and find a partner somewhere else in the room and sit down beside them.

When they've done this, you should buzz up a question on the screen and give learners sixty seconds/two minutes to discuss it (timings dependent on topic and age of learners).

Develop by buzzing up a series of related questions, one after the other, or by having learners form new buzz groups before you display a new question.

Design Brief

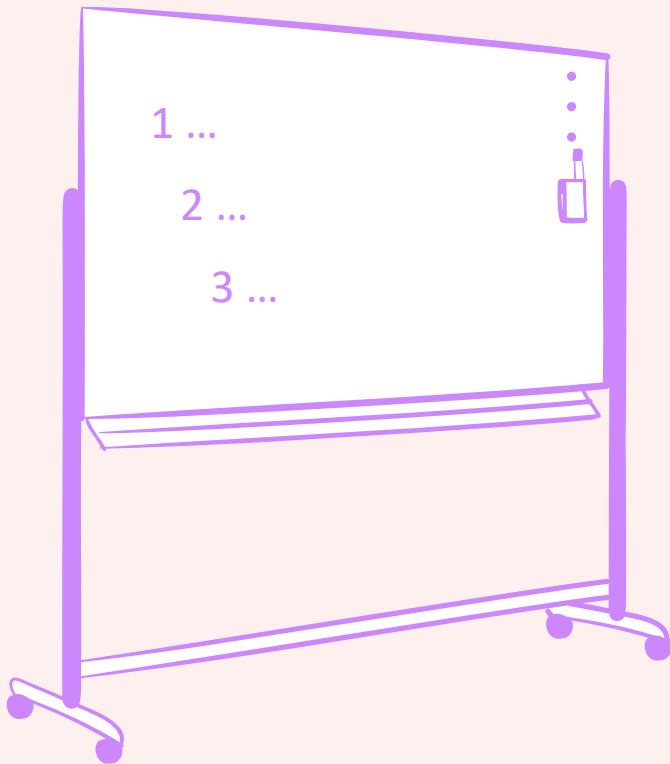
Provide learners with a design brief that they must fulfil in whatever way they think is best.

This need not be restricted to design-led lessons.

For example, you might set the following design brief in a History lesson:

‘Create something that conveys the various responses across Europe to French Imperialism under Napoleon.

Ensure you consider both the immediate and the longer-term responses as well as what actions, if any, these led to.’



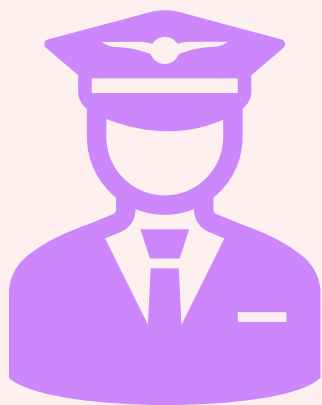
Worksheets



Here are five ways you can use worksheets to differentiate:

- Create a variety of worksheets in advance of the lesson. These should be aimed at various ability-levels in your class.
- Use several worksheets akin to the model outlined in the 'Pace Yourself' entry.
- Create a range of worksheets that gradually increase in difficulty. Learners then work their way through these, getting as far as they can.
- Create worksheets that include open questions or tasks.
- Create worksheets that provide learners with various options or choices (see the 'Options' and 'Choices' entries in this document).

Visits and Visitors



Visits and visitors are a great way of differentiating.

They are engaging for learners for many reasons:

- They are interactive.
- They are unusual.
- They are a change to the routine.
- They bring learning alive.
- They are different to most of what goes on in the classroom.

It is a good idea to plan work around a visit or visitor. This means:

- You can prepare learners to ensure they get the most out of it.
- You can capture their learning afterwards and build on this.

Learner Presentations



Divide the class into groups.

Give each group a topic to research or a question to answer.

Provide appropriate resources and ask the groups to create a presentation they will give to the whole class.

To avoid boring presentations, set learners some ground rules. For example:

- No reading off slides.
- Make a hand-out.
- Include one piece of drama.
- Include one game or interactive element.
- Include one discussion question (and then lead the discussion).

Case Studies



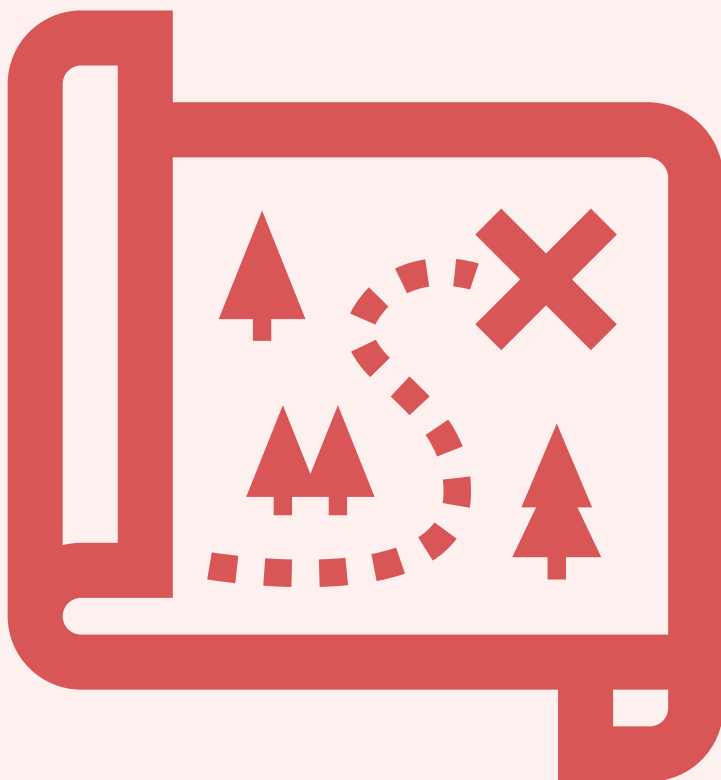
Case studies are a good method to use because they contextualise ideas and provide learners with concrete examples they can use to situate abstract concepts.

In essence, case studies provide evidence of concepts, categories and ideas at play in the real world.

They demonstrate what you are teaching about as it is lived.

Many textbooks and educational websites provide ready-made case studies. You can also use newspaper articles. If you cannot find what you want, create your own. You will be able to re-use it year-after-year.

Discovery Learning



Discovery learning has a mixed reputation. At it's best, it gives learners a chance to discover for themselves instead of being told by the teacher.

To make it effective in mainstream settings, you need to think carefully about how you will structure and resource the discovery opportunities for your learners.

Examples of how you can build discovery learning into your lessons include:

- Through group work.
- By providing some of the information and letting learners work out the rest.
- By setting learners independent tasks such as research or a design brief.
- Through experiments or investigations.

Experiments



Experiments have several benefits:

- They are practical, meaning they are accessible.
- They often involve discovery learning (see the previous entry).
- They can be exciting and engaging.
- They give learners the opportunity to lead their own learning.
- They promote reasoning and use of the scientific method.

Question Range



Use a range of questions in your lessons to take account of the different places your learners are at with their learning. Questions might be:

- Abstract or concrete.
- Open or closed.
- General or specific.
- Closely connected to the learning or more tenuous.
- Based on Bloom's Taxonomy.

There are other options as well, many of which are considered in the next few entries.

Question Planning



Plan your questions in advance.

The advantage of this is that you can create a range of questions that are specific to the topic and to your learners.

You might like to keep a note of your questions so you can use them when you teach the topic again.

If you feel you do not have time to plan questions, make use of categories and question types.

You can call on these during a lesson and create questions based on them.

This will stop you falling back onto questions you have already used, or which do not move learning forwards.

See other entries in this document for useful question types and categories.

Justify



Ask learners to justify the claims they make.

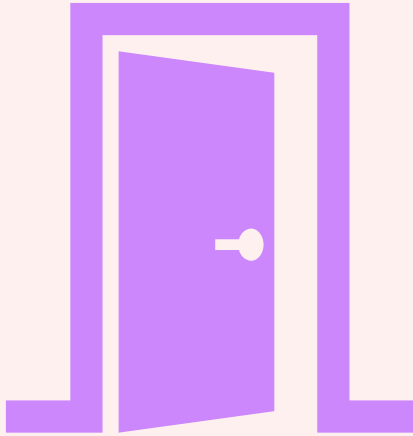
You might like to give them an opportunity to discuss this with a partner before telling you.

This will make the process easier for them.

All learners can justify their claims. The difference comes in the sophistication of these justifications.

By encouraging learners to justify what they say you are encouraging them to reason, which is integral to all learning.

Open and Closed



Think carefully about your distribution of open and closed questions.

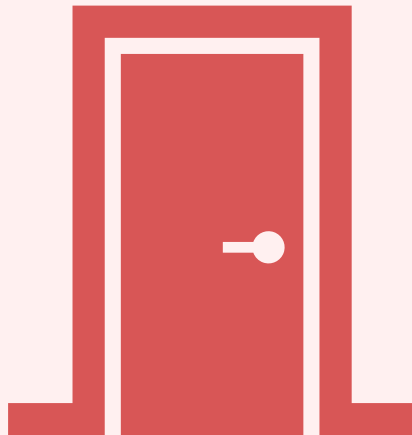
As a rule, I tend to favour open questions. This is because they allow learners the opportunity to reason, to advance positions, to make claims and to think carefully about a topic.

Closed questions are most useful when checking for knowledge, which is important in itself.

Use the word 'might' to open up your questions:

- What is photosynthesis?
- What might photosynthesis be?

There is greater scope for thinking and discussion in the second case than there is in the first. Though the first offers a quicker way to check knowledge.



Clarification



Ask learners questions of clarification.

Encourage them to do the same to you.

The great advantage of clarifying questions is that they diminish ambiguity.

This is because they require the person being questioned to explain an aspect of their thought or speech so that it is clear to the questioner.

Questions of clarification include:

- What exactly do you mean by that?
- Can you give me an example?
- How would that work?
- Can you explain that again?
- What would you compare it to?

Challenging Questions



Use challenging questions to stretch the more-able learners in your class. Here are some question types you can use:

- Evaluative questions (judge, assess, critique, defend).
- Creative questions (plan, unite, merge, create).
- Comparison questions (How does it compare? How is it different? To what is it similar and why?).
- Big questions (philosophical, 'what if' scenarios, values-based questions).
- Exam-style questions.

Learners Ask Questions



Encourage your learners to ask questions.

There are many benefits to this, including:

- Learners can ask questions at a level with which they are comfortable.
- Learners can hear other people's questions.
- Learners can observe how the teacher goes about answering questions.
- The teacher can find out what areas learners want to know about.
- Learners can find out information from the teacher's responses.

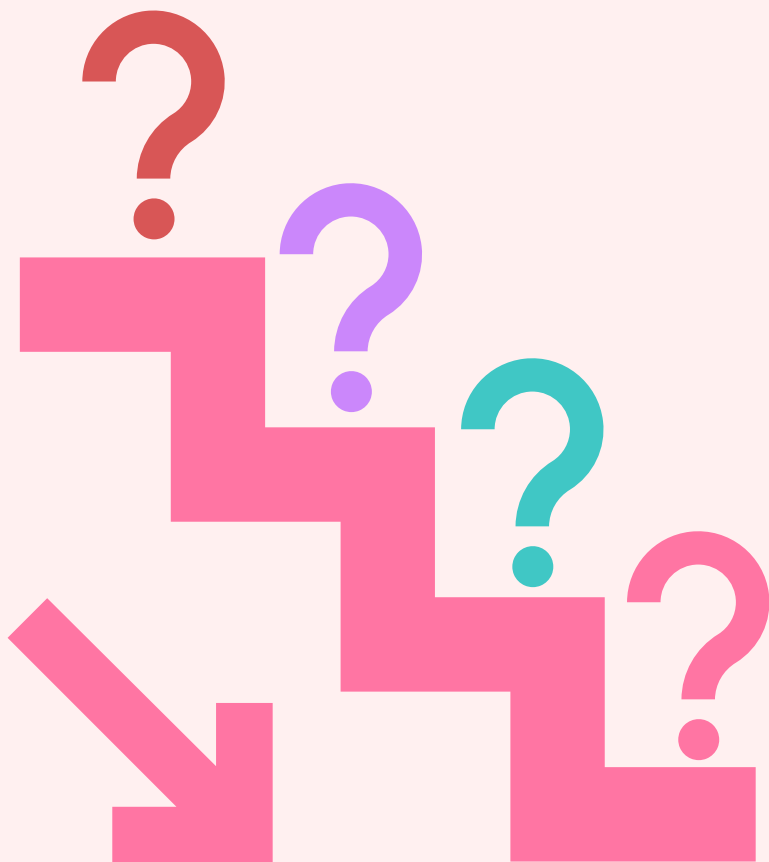
Serial Questioning

Plan a series of questions that you will ask to the class as a whole or to individual learners.

The purpose of this is to create a structure in which the questions:

- Get progressively more challenging.
- Take learners on a journey around different parts of their thinking.
- Encourage learners to think about something in a variety of ways.

By having a series of questions pre-prepared, you will be better placed to draw learners in and guide their learning in the direction you want.



Thinking Time



Ask a question.

Then ...

... Wait.

This let's learners think.

It gives them time to produce an answer.

It allows all learners to access the question.

And it let's more-able learners develop their responses.

Individual Questioning



If you go and spend time with individual learners, then you are almost certainly differentiating.

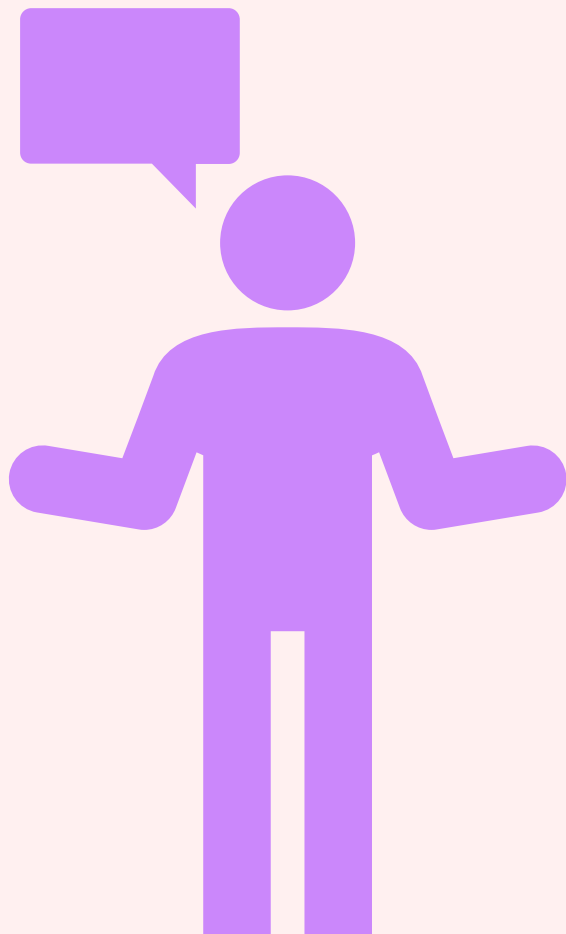
Even better is if you ask different learners different questions.

These should take account of what learners know, where they are at and what you know about their level of understanding.

In essence:

- Create opportunities where you can go and work with individual learners.
- Tailor your questioning to the learner with whom you are working.
- Respond to what they say with further questions.

Assertive Questioning



Don't wait for learners to put their hands up.

This will inevitably lead to the learners who are most confident (whether rightly or not) dominating discussion.

Instead, be assertive.

Decide who you want to hear from and then ask them. This could be in a whole-class situation or when learners are working in pairs or in groups.

Think about your purpose beforehand. Is it:

- To move the learning on?
- To root out misconceptions?
- To encourage reasoning?

Or is it something else? Use this to guide your questioning and your choice of who to question.

Task Mixture



Use a mixture of tasks.

This ensures learners have a variety of opportunities.

It prevents learners from feeling that 'we only do things one way' (and if you do, that could be a way that some learners find difficult to access).

You can use a mixture of tasks:

- In a single lesson.
- Across a unit of work.
- Across the year as a whole.

You might like to develop a collection of task-types with which you feel comfortable and stick to these.

Or you might use the opportunity to test out different approaches.

Task Mixture II

An alternative way to judge whether you have a mixture of tasks is to look at what you are asking learners to produce.

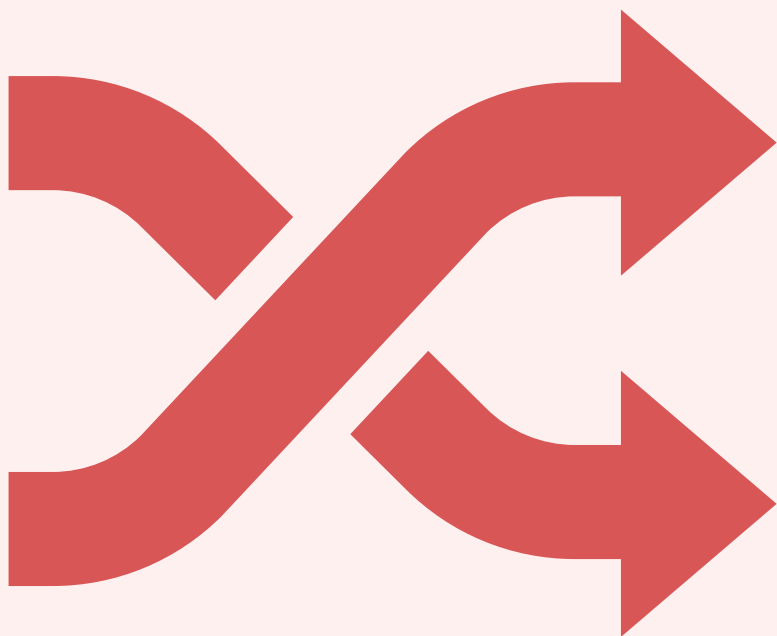
This is a little like working backwards.

When planning a lesson or unit of work, identify a mixture of products you would like learners to have created by the end of it.

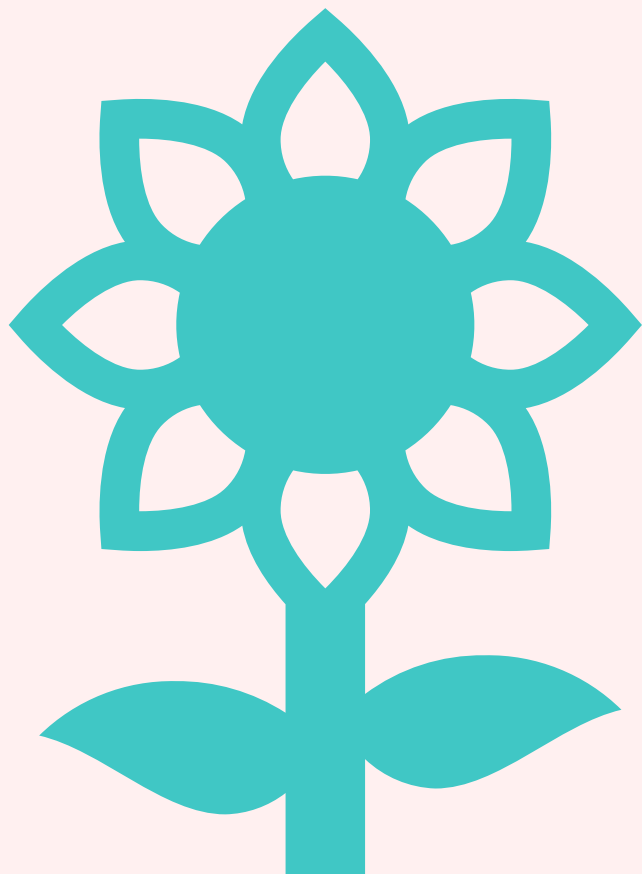
Base your tasks on this list and they will necessarily be a mixture.

This is because they will be driven by the list of different products.

You will have no choice but to use a range of activities to ensure learners can create these.



Blooming Extensions



Use Bloom's Taxonomy to create extension questions and tasks.

Here are a list of keywords linked to the top three levels:

- **Analysis:** Analyse, Appraise, Categorize, Compare, Contrast, Differentiate, Discriminate, Distinguish, Examine, Experiment, Explore, Investigate, Question, Research, Test.
- **Synthesis:** Combine, Compose, Construct, Create, Devise, Design, Formulate, Hypothesise, Integrate, Merge, Organise, Plan, Propose, Synthesise, Unite.
- **Evaluate:** Appraise, Argue, Assess, Critique, Defend, Evaluate, Examine, Grade, Inspect, Judge, Justify, Rank, Rate, Review, Value.

Evaluate and Create



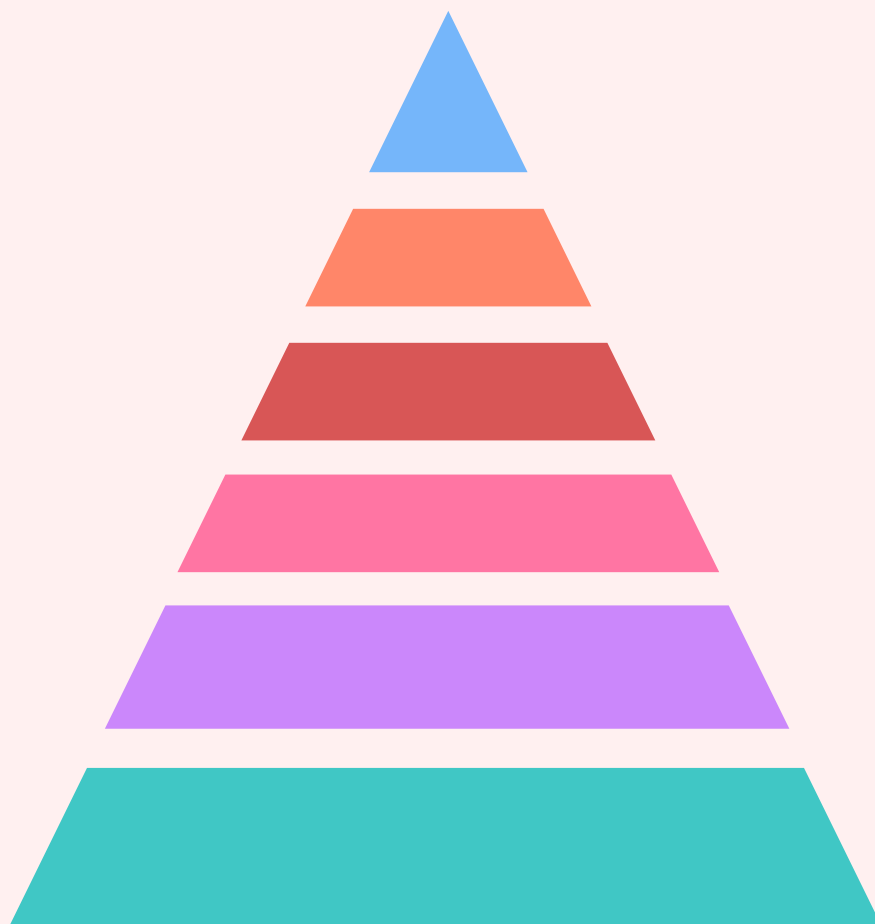
When setting extension tasks and extension questions, focus on asking learners to evaluate and create (synthesise).

These are the highest-level skills in Bloom's Taxonomy, and they require the greatest degree of mastery over the material being studied.

In addition, when you are planning to include stepped activities or a mixture of tasks (see earlier entries), use evaluation- and synthesis-based activities as end-points.

This ensures the level of challenge increases as you progress through the lesson and gives all learners the best chance of maximising their progress.

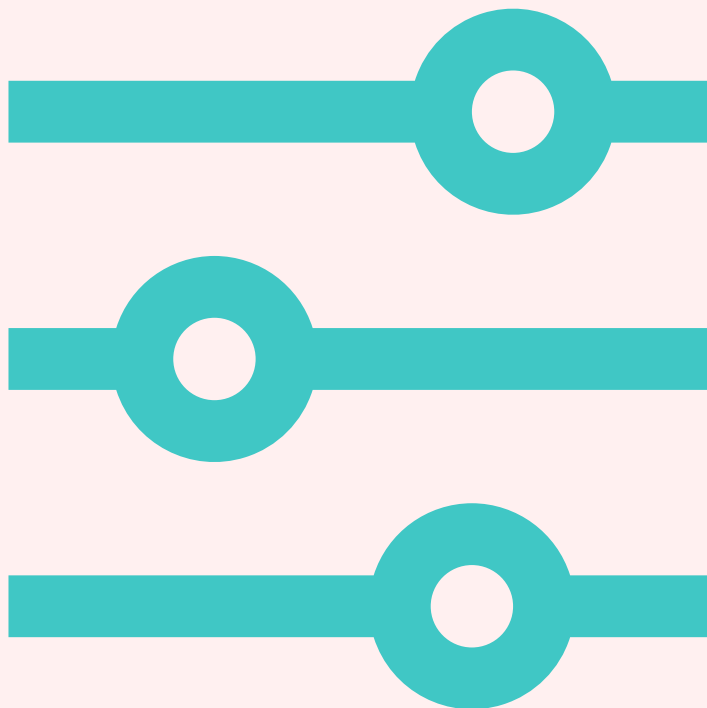
Blooming Questions



Use Bloom's Taxonomy to tailor your questioning so it sets the right level of challenge for the learner in front of you. Here are keywords for all six levels of the taxonomy.

- **Knowledge:** Arrange, Define, Describe, List, Match, Memorise, Name, Order, Quote, Recognise, Recall, Repeat, Reproduce, Restate, Retain.
- **Comprehension:** Characterise, Classify, Complete, Describe, Discuss, Establish, explain, Express, Identify, Illustrate, Recognise, Report, Relate, Sort, Translate.
- **Application:** Apply, Calculate, Choose, Demonstrate, Dramatise, Employ, Implement, Interpret, Operate, Perform, Practise, Role-Play, Sketch, Solve, Suggest.
- **Analysis:** Analyse, Appraise, Categorize, Compare, Contrast, Differentiate, Discriminate, Distinguish, Examine, Experiment, Explore, Investigate, Question, Research, Test.
- **Synthesis:** Combine, Compose, Construct, Create, Devise, Design, Formulate, Hypothesise, Integrate, Merge, Organise, Plan, Propose, Synthesise, Unite.
- **Evaluate:** Appraise, Argue, Assess, Critique, Defend, Evaluate, Examine, Grade, Inspect, Judge, Justify, Rank, Rate, Review, Value.

Top, Middle and Bottom



When teaching mixed-ability classes we often teach to the 'middle'.

To some extent this is inevitable. It is the safest position for ensuring that most of the learners get what we are talking about.

It can be good to mix this up though.

Try to teach to the 'bottom' and the 'top' at least a couple of a times a lesson. Make a conscious effort to do this.

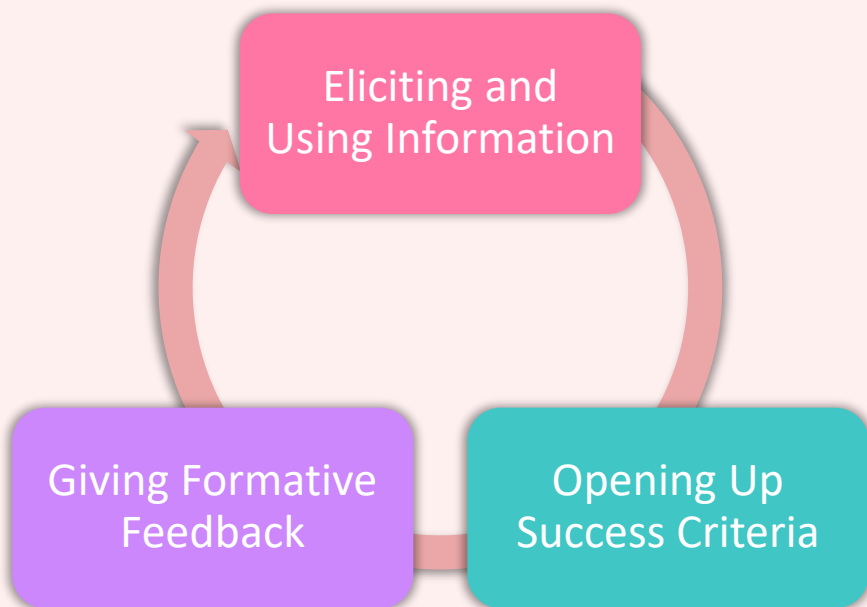
You might preface it by saying, 'This might seem obvious, but I just want to make it clear for you,' or 'This next bit is a bit complicated, but stick with it, it'll be worth it.'

Another option is to teach the top continuously, to create a permanently high level of challenge.

You will then need to scaffold up for learners who struggle to immediately access the learning.

This brings its own challenges for you as the teacher but is highly rewarding when you master it.

AFL



There is significant overlap between effective differentiation, or adaptive teaching, and effective use of assessment for learning.

Assessment for learning involves doing three things:

- Eliciting and using information about student learning.
- Opening up success criteria.
- Giving formative feedback.

Through this, lessons, teaching and learner effort become increasingly targeted.

Or, to put it another way, adapted.

To the needs of the learners, and to the goals the teacher is seeking to achieve.

For more on AFL, see my free AFL Toolkit resource and my free AFL Knowledge Base.

Listening Frame



Create a listening frame for learners who struggle to make notes or follow what is being said.

For example, a sheet of A4, divided into sections, with headings indicating what learners should capture in each box.

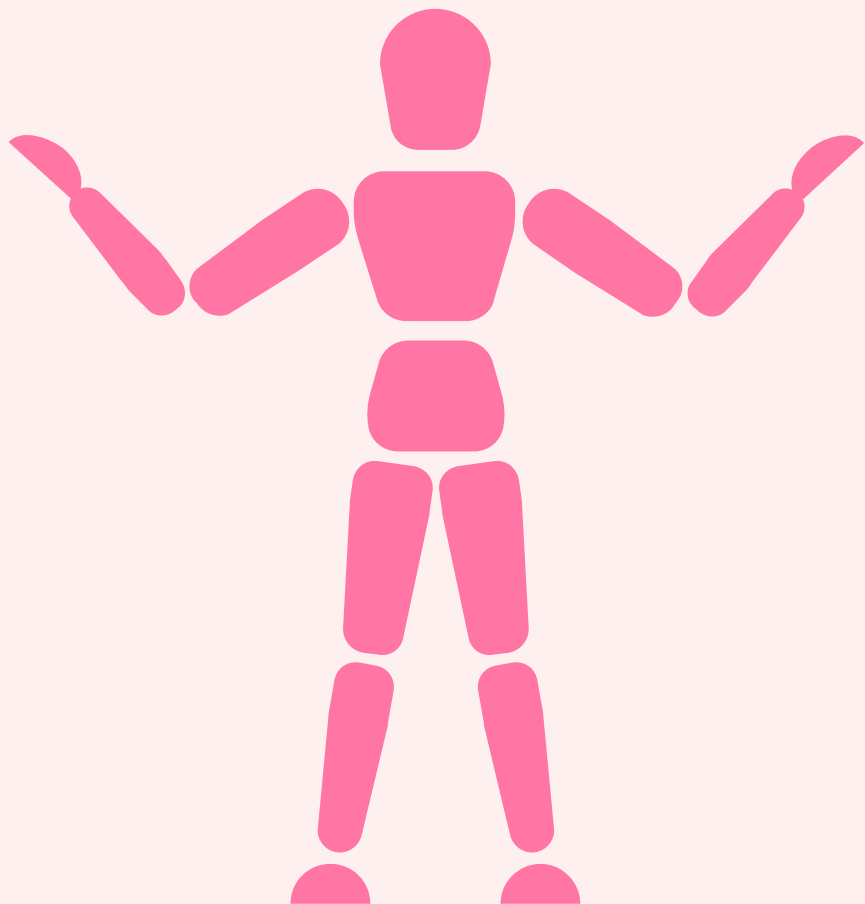
Learners can then use this to make notes.

The sections will help them to order the information they receive.

This eliminates a thinking process, thus allowing them to concentrate exclusively on listening and writing.

In essence, a listening frame is a scaffold that does a bit of work for the learner, freeing up space in their working memory so it becomes easier for them to actively attend to what is being said.

Modelling



Examples of modelling include:

- Showing learners what you want them to do
- Modelling writing
- Exemplar work
- Peer models
- Modelling speaking and listening
- Modelling how to think about a task, problem or process
- Physical demonstrations

In each case, the model is a scaffold the learner can use to better understand what they need to do to be successful.

Learners can copy, borrow from or imitate the model.

According to Social Learning Theory, there are four prerequisites for modelling to be effective: Attention, Retention, Reproduction and Motivation.

Check Sheets



Provide learners with check sheets for tasks.

This gives them something they can refer to as they progress.

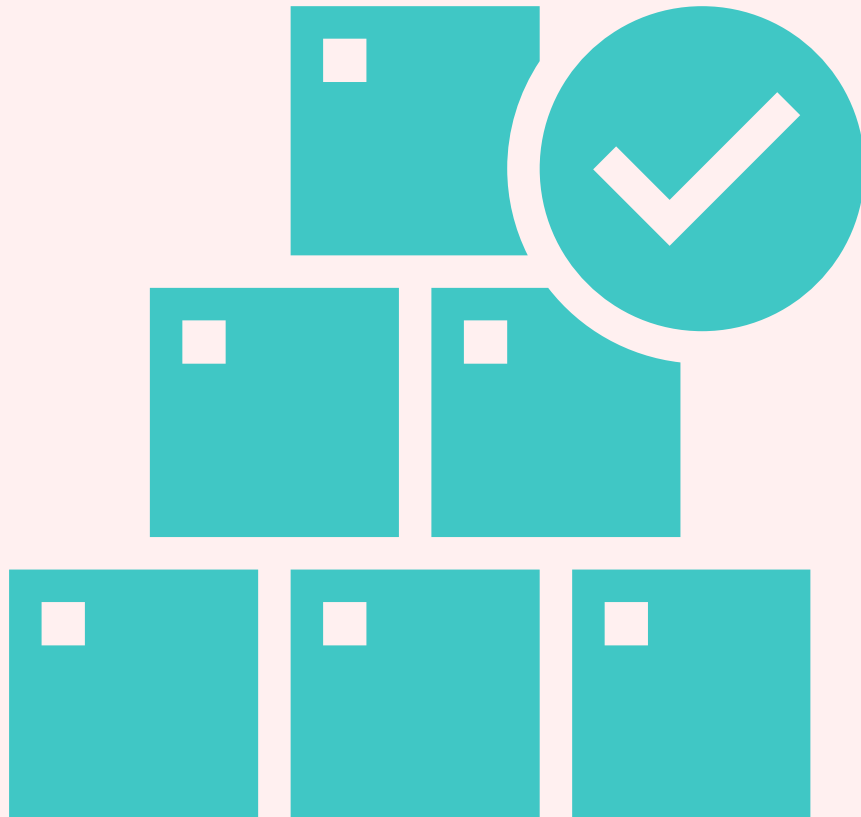
It is a means for them to keep track of where they are at and to know what they still must do.

A particularly good use of check sheets is when learners are doing written work.

In this case, the check sheet helps learners to keep track of what they have done and where they are going but also acts as a tacit guide demonstrating how they should structure their work.

This reveals how check sheets do a little bit of the work for the learner, taking care of the overarching process so that they can focus on the detail of what they need to do next.

Structure Guidelines



Provide learners with explicit structure guidelines to help them with written work.

Here is an example of an essay guide:

- Paragraph 1: Introduction
- Paragraph 2: First argument for
- Paragraph 3: Second argument for
- Paragraph 4: First argument against
- Paragraph 5: Second argument against
- Paragraph 6: Conclusion

Structure guidelines can be general or specific. You will need to judge what is most appropriate for your learners.

The goal is to scaffold learners' engagement with writing.

The guidelines take care of the structure for them, meaning they can focus their attention on conveying what they want to say.

Sentence Starters

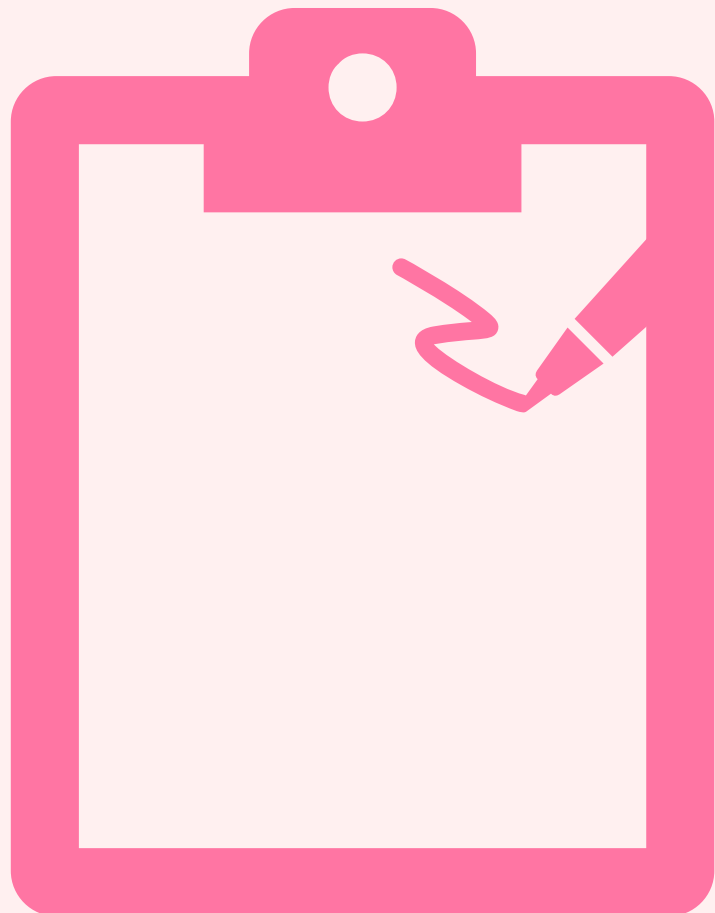


Sentence starters are a great way to get learners going with their work.

Here are five ways you can use them:

- Write them on your slides.
- Have generic ones on the walls of your room.
- Produce a sheet or booklet of sentence starters for learners who struggle to get going with their writing.
- Create a couple of sentence starters with your class before starting an activity.
- Ask a couple of learners who have started writing to read out the beginnings of their sentences for the rest of the class to hear.

Writing Frame



A writing frame is like a listening frame (see a few entries previous) in that it does some of the work for the learner.

This allows them to concentrate their energies on a single task – the writing itself.

Writing frames can be highly structured, giving sentence starters or indications of content for every separate section.

Alternatively, they can be more akin to structure guidelines.

You can make some generic writing frames for particular genres (for example, essays, reports, summaries) and use these across different lessons.

Over time, you might like to decrease the level of detail in your writing frames, reflecting the increased skill your learners will have developed.

Planning Pro-Forma



A planning pro-forma is a document you hand out to learners and which they use to help plan their work.

You might have a range of pro-forma to cover writing tasks, group work, research tasks and so on.

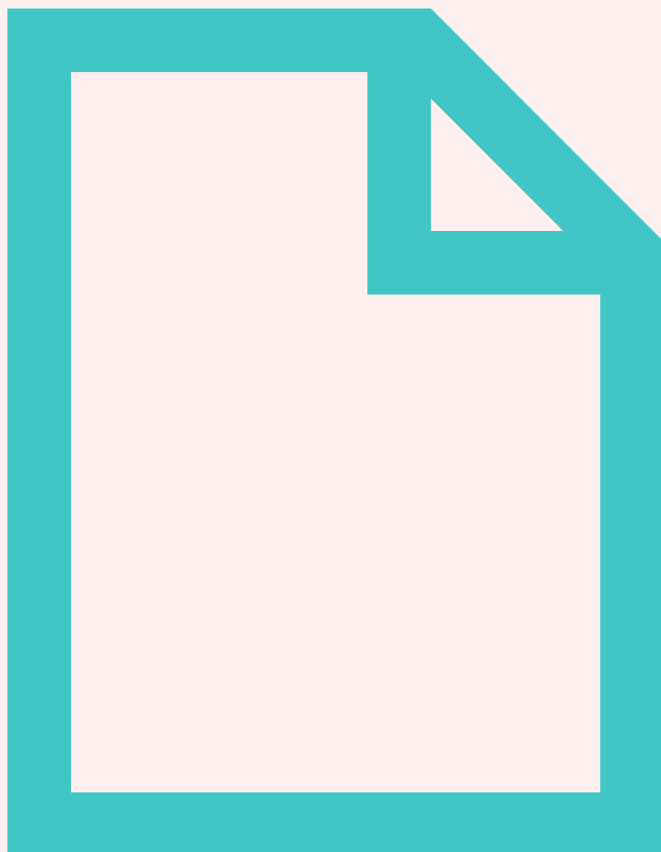
The level of detail in your pro-forma will be dependent on how much support you feel your learners need.

It may be the case that with some learners you provide detailed guidelines for them to follow or a set of options for each stage of their planning, from which they then choose.

Collect feedback from learners on whether they find your planning pro-forma helpful.

If they don't, adjust them and try again.

Scrap Paper



Scrap paper is a thinking tool.

It is a memory extension.

By writing something on a piece of scrap paper, we remove the need to hold it in our minds.

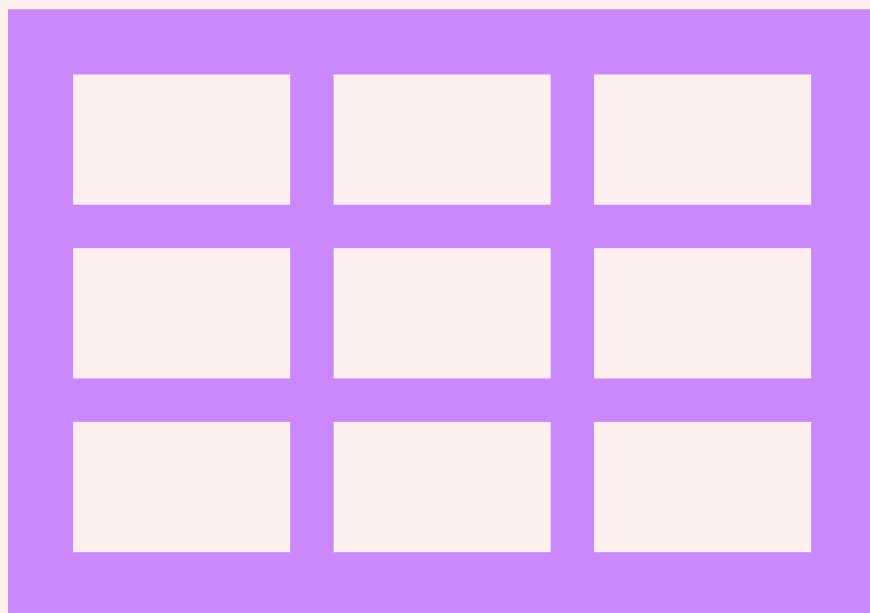
This frees up space in working memory.

And working memory is limited. For everyone.

Encourage learners to use scrap paper.

If they do, they will be self-scaffolding. Using the scrap paper to expand the capacity of what they can do.

Bullet Points and Tables



Bullet points and tables are different ways of organising information.

They present material in ways that many learners find easier to deal with.

Bullet points simplify.

They make it easier to get to grips with complex content.

Tables are a way of dividing, ordering and categorising information.

Using tables and bullet points – either constructed by learners or provided by the teacher – as a precursor to extended writing often proves fruitful.

Individual Writing



Individual writing tasks are differentiated because each learner can access the task in their own way.

Use some of the techniques and strategies explained in this document to support learners when they are doing independent writing.

Try to ensure that you precede individual writing tasks with an activity that feeds in. For example, discussion.

This makes it easier for learners to start writing.

They will already have had an opportunity to think about the topic and begin ordering their thoughts during the prior activity.

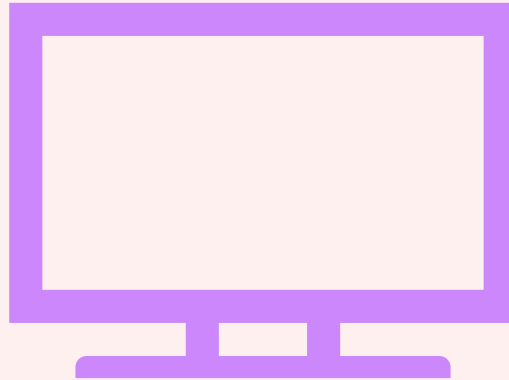
Challenge



Use my free Challenge Toolkit resource to stretch and challenge the thinking of your learners.

Find it in the resources section of my website and unlock fifty strategies for stretching and challenging all learners, including the more-able.

Different Media



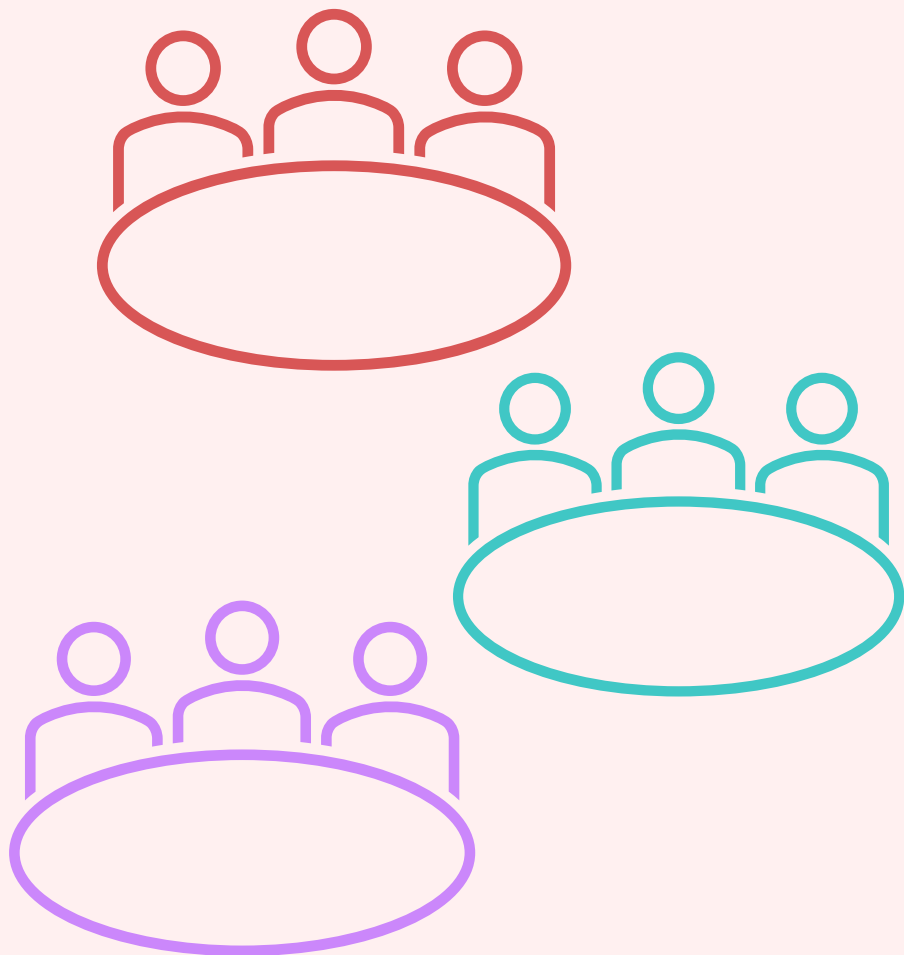
Use a range of different media in a lesson, across a week, or through a unit of work.

The range of material will ensure that learners are kept engaged and that there are different opportunities for accessing the content.

Media include:

- Videos
- Songs
- Images
- Animations
- Newspaper articles
- Stories
- Hand-outs
- Slides

Activity Stations



Activity stations works as follows:

- Set up several different stations around the room.
- Each station should have a different resource and/or task attached to it.
- Ensure that there are a variety of types of resource and task. For example: you might have a case study, a laptop with a video on it, a card sort, a hand-out, a diamond nine and a newspaper article.
- Put learners in groups and assign each group to a station.
- Rotate the groups after a set length of time. Aim for each group to visit each station.

Narrative



Stories help us make sense of the world.

They provide a way of dealing with complex ideas that is often more accessible than non-narrative prose.

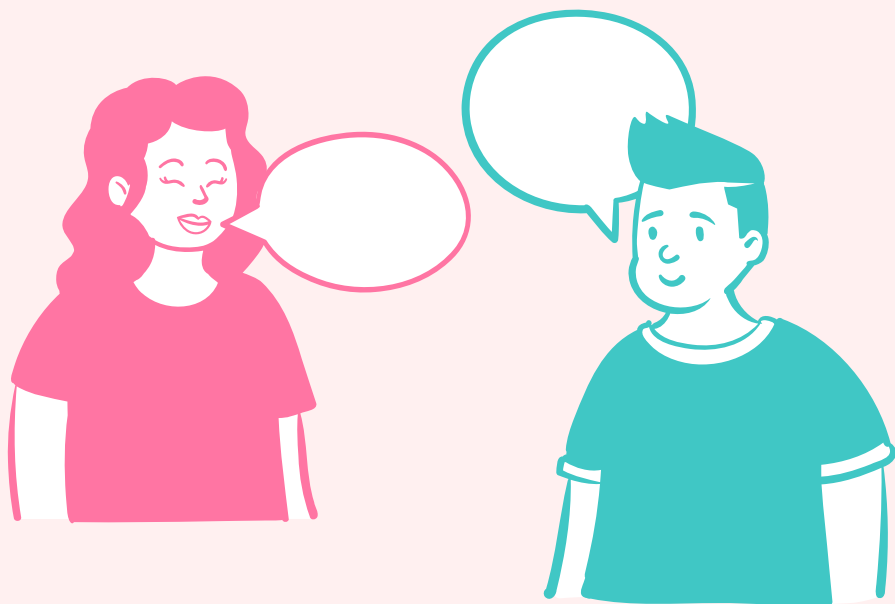
Use stories in your lessons to help learners access the content.

You might also like to create tasks in which learners write their own stories, based on some aspect of what you have been studying.

Consider also the power of stories to aid memorisation and subsequent recall.

A fact that has been used by teachers for thousands of years.

Peer Research



Here is how peer research works:

- Introduce learners to a topic.
- Explain that they will be researching the views and experiences of their peers.
- Ask them to create a set of questions they can ask people about the topic. I have found that between 5 and 10 is best, depending on time constraints.
- Invite learners to interview each other using their questions.
- When finished, learners write up their results.

Talk To Me



Set out with the aim of talking to as many learners as possible during a lesson.

By doing this, you will be able to ascertain where most of them are at in relation to the learning.

In turn, you will be able to support and assist those who are struggling and stretch those who are finding it easy.

It will not always be possible to talk to lots of learners.

Particularly if you have a difficult class who need to be managed from the front.

If this is the case, aim to do it once every few lessons.

Alternatively, call learners up to the front to talk to you. Make a note of who comes up and try to get through the whole class over multiple lessons.

Verbal Rehearsal



Verbal rehearsal is when we give learners a chance to practice speaking their ideas through discussion.

This could be in pairs, threes or larger groups.

Verbal rehearsal is a form of practice.

It let's learners order, edit and refine their thoughts, particularly when the discussion opportunities you use are carefully structured.

For these reasons, it is an excellent precursor to writing.

Using verbal rehearsal before starting a writing task means learners are primed and ready to write as soon as the task begins.

The preceding discussion scaffolds their writing, setting them up to be successful.