

Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Glossary

1. **The Minute Paper:** Just what it says; at the end of a class session ask students to write for one minute about what they have learned in the class.
2. **Focused Listing:** Similar to the minute paper but using a listing format. Ask students to list 2, 3, 4, things they learned more about in a given session.
3. **Muddiest Point:** Ask students to write questions or statements about points on which they are not quite clear.
4. **Empty Outlines:** Handouts with only key points for a lesson listed in outline form. Leave space for students to fill in details. These can be turned in for assessment purposes, or students can share them with each other to be sure each is on the correct wavelength.
5. **Memory Matrix:** A simple, two-dimensional diagram—a rectangle divided into rows and columns used to organize information and to illustrate relationships. Good for classes where students need to learn a lot of information about a particular subject, for example in A&P where students have to learn about biological systems or in foreign language where student have to learn verb endings, etc. (See p. 144 of Angelo and Cross, Classroom Assessment Techniques.)
6. **Class Starter Questions:** For this to work successfully, it needs to be a standing assignment for each student to bring in a 3x5 card with a question already formulated as his/her admit to class. The teacher can quickly sort the cards and begin class by addressing key issues. This gives the instructor a good idea of what learning has transpired prior to the class and what still needs to be addressed.
7. **Guided Reading Questions:** Questions prepared by the instructor in advance of a reading assignment. This will lead to better class discussion; especially good for literature classes.
8. **Progressive Quiz:** A one-two question quiz on reading assignments given at the beginning of each class period. The instructor takes up the papers after the first quiz; returns them for the next one, etc. All questions/responses are kept on the same sheet(s) of paper. The aggregate score could be used as a test grade at the end of the semester. (This is also a good way to take attendance without calling roll. Anyone who is not there to pick up his/her paper is marked absent and gets no chance for make-up.)
9. **Categorizing Grids:** This is an assessment of students' ability to sort items into categories. Students are presented with a grid containing two or three important categories and a scrambled list of subordinate terms, images, equations, definitions or other items that belong in one or the other of the categories. Then they are given a limited time to place the items in the appropriate grid.
10. **Defining Features Matrix:** This matrix requires students to categorize concepts according to the presence (+) or absence (-) of important defining features. This can be used for such subjects as literary or historical time periods; the differences among theories, thinkers, processes, etc.

11. **Pro and Con Grids:** This simple exercise can give an instructor a quick overview of a class's analysis of the pros and cons, advantages/disadvantages etc. of an issue of concern. Good for classes that don't necessarily deal in absolutes.
12. **Invented Dialogs:** This is a role playing activity that allows instructors to assess how well students have learned facts, ideas and concepts. Have individuals or small groups assume roles and create dialogs to illustrate their knowledge.
13. **Application Cards:** This is a grown-up version of the flash cards we used to learn multiplication facts or definitions of words. The concept/theory key word goes on one side; the application on the other. Can be used for review in small groups or for an entire class.
14. **One Sentence Synthesis:** This is similar to the minute paper but requires a higher level thinking skill. Ask the students at the end of a class to synthesize the content of the lecture or discussion into one sentence.
15. **Chain Notes:** No, this is not the same as a chain letter. It is a way to assess what students are focusing on or learning or questioning during a class session. Give students a 3x5 card when they come into class. Then, sometime later in the class period, start a large envelope around the room in which each student drops his or her card with what ever response you have asked for.
16. **Electronic Mail Feedback:** If you have class list serves, you can address assessment questions through e-mail. These should be fairly innocuous since they obviously cannot be anonymous in their responses.
17. **Teacher Designed Feedback Forms:** These can be more anonymous and can give you information on many aspects of the class or a particular session of class. They can be as simple as "What do you like about this class? What do you dislike? What suggestions do you have for improvement?" Or they can be as specific as you want them to be.

Notes:

Most of these ideas come from Angelo, Tony and Patricia Cross, Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers, 2nd edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993.

You will note that they encompass various levels of critical thinking from knowledge recall to analysis, application, synthesis and evaluation.

Some forms, including the Minute Paper, Focused Listing, and Muddiest Points are available on the Isothermal WEB site under Assessment Publications.

Also, at the same site you will find Quality Improvement Forms which you are asked to use when you make changes in your course delivery or course content based on your own or on student assessment of your courses. These, along with evidence of your use of informal classroom assessment techniques such as those listed above, are components of your faculty portfolio.