

Assessing learning

This roundup brings together ideas and experiences from our global teacher community on assessing learning. Which ones connect with your own practice?



What the community thinks:

The community believes that assessment should support real learning and communication. However, many teachers still feel pressure to 'teach to the test,' which they feel can limit learners' progress.



In Spain most students study English only for the certificate. If you don't teach to the exam, you will lose students.



When I started [in Lithuania], I used to teach my students what they would need in real life, but observing other teachers I turned to teaching to the test, because it looked "the right thing to do". Well, now I am really in two minds.



In my country, Ethiopian students also learn English for exam, so more students can't [become] fluent speakers... we must take action.



Some community members try to avoid giving number or letter grades. They focus on feedback and participation instead, helping learners see assessment as part of learning and reducing stress.



Out of 94 teachers, 68% said they use numbers and 18% said they use letters when they give grades to learners.



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Different kinds of assessment



Formative assessment – Ongoing checks and feedback during learning to guide improvement

Views from the community about formative assessment:

I grade them based on their production. Books, notebooks, portfolios, participation in class. They know they are being assessed but the stress is practically non-existent. – Community member in Brazil.

[This kind of] assessment is more about helping students improve and understand where they are in their journey. 😊 – Community member



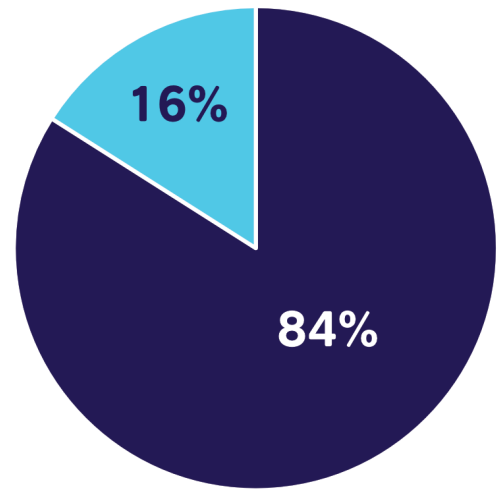
Summative assessment – Final evaluation at the end of a unit or course

Views from the community about summative assessment:

- Can be stressful, but may also motivate learners when they're well-prepared.
- A teacher in South Korea noted that small amounts of stress can actually increase engagement and focus.
- Preparing learners for formal exams can build valuable skills such as time management, following instructions and concise writing.

Views on peer assessment

'Peer assessment is effective'



■ Agree ■ Disagree

Based on 165 votes on Facebook and Instagram (July 2025)

I think it depends on the group – on the dynamics among kids + cognitive and emotional skills.

– Community member in Czechia

The evidence is mixed: peer-assessment can sometimes have positive but also negative effects on learning... We can't simply say, "It works" or "It doesn't work."

– Community member in Spain

Peer assessment along with self-assessment makes the basis for a fair and full teacher assessment.

– Community member in Cuba

From polls to deeper insights

As one community member pointed out, polls like this show opinions, not proof.

In our teacher community, we use these to spark discussion – with teachers sharing evidence and experiences in the comments.

Practical challenges – fitting in formative assessment

A teacher in Azerbaijan noted that with Ministry-approved textbooks and limited class time, traditional tests often feel like the only realistic option. However, even small formative checks added into lessons can help monitor progress and support learning.

Community advice on assessment



Focus on a few skills at a time – Rather than giving feedback on everything, monitor one or two key points and guide learners on how to improve.



Vary assessment types – Don't rely only on multiple-choice tests. Include essays, projects, practical tasks or problem-solving activities so learners can show a fuller range of learning skills.



Use visuals for younger learners – Pictures and other visual prompts can help them show understanding. They can name, classify, predict or work out ideas from images (for example, abstract ideas like friendship or teamwork).



Support psychological factors – Build confidence and help learners manage exam stress.



Involve the learners in assessment – For example:

Before an evaluation situation I decide which things... we should focus on (I discuss this together with my students). Students really appreciate being part of the process. – Community member in Norway



Preparing learners for summative assessment.

- **Separate approach:** Some teachers dedicate certain lessons purely to exam practice and other lessons to skills like communication, teamwork or problem-solving. While this is practical and realistic – and often expected in some contexts – it can risk narrowing the curriculum and encouraging 'teaching to the test.'
- **Integrated approach:** Others weave exam-related training into regular lessons. This approach is often seen as more effective, since it connects exam preparation with meaningful learning. For example:

I follow topics in context, then integrate exam-related training at the end of each theme. – Community member in Lebanon



Explore this theme for yourself using our ready-made Pathway