

TOPIC 4: CHECKING LEARNING RESOURCE SHEET

Assertive questioning

Groups work on thought-provoking question. Teacher or trainer asks individuals to give their group's answer, and then asks the rest of the group to discuss and agree a 'group answer'. Only then does the teacher or trainer 'give away' the right answer.

Pair checking

Teacher or trainer asks a question, then learners work alone to answer it. Pairs then compare their answers, giving their partner one good point and one way their answer could be improved. The teacher or trainer then gives the correct answer.

Q & A: volunteers answer

Learners volunteer to answer questions posed by teacher or trainer/peers.

Q & A: nominees answer

Learners are nominated by the teacher or trainer to answer questions, sometimes known as 'tagged questioning'. Learners are named after the question has been posed, thereby encouraging the whole group to consider possible answers.

Background-knowledge probe

Short, simple questionnaire given before introducing new unit/material/topic. Learners invited to respond. Provides a preview of what's to come and a review of what may already be known. Can be used as pre- and post-assessment activity: before, to find out baseline knowledge level; after, to get a rough sense of how much and how well material has been learned.

Form a question

Learners are asked to form questions based on the session input to check one another's learning. This can also be done by using a computer-based package.

Empty outlines

Teacher or trainer provides learners with an empty or partially completed outline of an in-group activity/presentation or homework exercise and gives limited amount of time to fill in the blank spaces.

Focused listing

Learners are asked to focus attention on a single important term, name or concept from a session. Learners are then directed to list several ideas that are closely related to that 'focus point'.

Memory matrix

Learners are invited to complete the blank cells of a two-dimensional diagram: a rectangle divided into rows and columns and used to organise information and illustrate relationships. Row and column headings are given, but the cells are left empty. (See the example and try it out.)

Hand signals/cue cards

Learners are asked to offer responses to questions posed by teacher, trainer or peer: Yes/No, True/False, 1 - 5 on small cards/sticky notes simultaneously. Teacher or trainer can gain overview, which can be shared with learners.

One-word /phrase/sentence recap

Learners are asked to write down new aspect(s) of learning from session on sticky notes, card or A5 paper.

Direct paraphrasing

Learners are asked to write a lay person's 'translation' of a concept learned and gear it to a specific audience.

Application cards

Learners are asked to suggest other application(s) of the principle/theory/procedure that has been explored in group.

Minute paper

Three or four minutes before the end of the session, or stage in the session, learners are asked to write a short (timed), focused response to a carefully worded prompt, e.g.

'What was the most important thing you learned about X?'

'What new aspect of Y did you learn today?'

'What was the most surprising thing you learned today?'

'What point remains least clear to you?'

Buzz groups - volunteers answer

Learners work in small groups to answer a thought-provoking question. Teacher or trainer asks each group in turn to contribute part of the answer. A volunteer answers for each group.

Buzz groups - nominees answer

As above, but after the discussion the teacher or trainer nominates the learner in each group who will contribute that group's answer(s). This ensures that all focus on the task and all consider how to articulate response(s).

Observation of activity

Teacher or trainer observes and listens to an activity undertaken by learners. It's important that the teacher or trainer assesses their performance against specific criteria, whether this be formally or informally.

Multiple-choice short test/quiz

There are several variations on this method of checking learning. Tests/quizzes can be multiple choice, require yes/no answers, be scored or not. They can be paper-based or computer-based. Computer-based assessments can offer built-in feedback to the learner in various ways.

Short answer test/quiz

This is probably one of the most familiar and commonly used methods of checking learning. It can be very effective, provided that learners receive prompt feedback.

Self-assessment strategies

Many of the above methods lend themselves to self-assessment and don't necessarily need to be teacher or trainer-led.

One-to-one review or tutorial

This provides a much more focused opportunity to check an individual learner's progress and agree actions and targets for improvement.

Some of these techniques may be new to you. If you try them, don't expect consistent success initially but do persevere. Choose a group you feel confident with.

Explain the purpose of the activity. You should feed back to the group what you learn from the strategy and how you'll use the information.

Try the techniques with different groups of learners to compare responses and hone your skills.