

Background Knowledge Probe (Assesses Prior Knowledge, Recall, & Understanding)

Estimated level of time/energy required to prepare is MEDIUM

WHEN USING TECHNOLOGY: Estimated level to respond (students) and to analyze is LOW

Description: Students respond to short, simple questionnaires that gauge students' prior knowledge.

Purpose: Assists in determining an effective starting point and the appropriate level of a lesson.

Procedure:

1. Consider what students may already know about a new concept, subject, or topic.
2. Prepare 2 or 3 open-ended questions **OR** 10 to 20 multiple choice or true/false items as probes.
3. Prepare the probes to be display-ready by writing it on the board, a transparency, or digitally projected.
4. Hand out answer sheet, with or without questions. It is best if students do not write their names, unless there is a very good reason to know who wrote which comments.
5. Tell students it will not be graded.
6. Share results with students, telling them how you will use the info to guide your lessons.

Examples:

Course: Survey of English Literature

Topic: Shakespeare's plays

Course: Fundamentals of Electrical Circuits

Topic: Measuring current, voltage, & resistance

Adaptations/Extensions:

- 1) After answering questions individually, students can work in pairs to determine correct answers.
- 2) If responses are anonymous, have small groups rate & sort responses from other groups.

Suggestions: Respond to students' feedback the very next time class meets. Responding to students' feedback may take longer than anticipated because questions lead to other questions. Set clear time limits. To temper expectations and disappointment, let students know you will not comment on everything.

References and Resources:

Angelo, T.A, and Cross, K.P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.