

Top Three Ways to Jump-Start Pre-Assessment in Your Classroom

1. Diagnostic Assessments

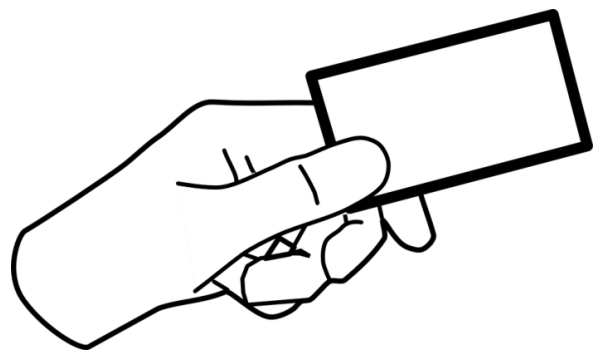
Although we most often think of assessment as administered after an instructional assessment, it can be equally useful when implemented beforehand. Diagnostic assessments typically comprise 20–50 items that assess what a student already knows and is able to do regarding the concepts and skills at hand. Do students know what a linear equation is? Can they solve one? Can they graph it? Do they need additional review before learning advanced concepts, or are they likely to master these quickly and need additional challenges



and enrichment opportunities? Would it be beneficial to differentiate instruction or group students in particular ways during activities, or is whole-class instruction preferable as all students arriving with roughly the same level of knowledge? Creating and administering a diagnostic assessment aligned to relevant outcomes can quickly yield answers to questions like this, allowing you to tailor your teaching to the specific needs of your students. Even better, a number of assessment tools exist online that make crafting, scoring, and tracking results from these assessments easier than ever. Browse [wisewire](#) for an assortment of free assessment creation tools and purchase options!

2. Entrance and Exit Tickets

Entrance and exit tickets can serve as targeted or “mini” versions of more robust diagnostic or formative assessments. At the beginning of class, distribute an index card with one or two questions that will help you ascertain what students know and/or are motivated to find out about a given concept. You might ask students to solve a word problem or equation, define a term, draw or label a diagram or map, complete a sentence or paragraph with blanks, or respond to a writing prompt.



Repeat or introduce a similar exercise at the end of class as an “exit ticket” in order to track how well students understood the day’s instruction and/or determine where to direct your attention during additional lessons on the given topic.



3. KWL

Developed in 1986 by reading specialist Donna Ogle, the KWL chart has stood the test of time. Why? It works, at activating prior knowledge, piquing students' interest in new learning opportunities, and providing teachers with a gauge of what students already know and are motivated to learn. Although originally conceived as a pre-reading tool for nonfiction texts, the KWL chart can be used in a variety of contexts and subject areas. Distribute and/or display a chart with three columns: K (What do you *know*?), W (What do you *want to know*?), and L (What have you *learned*?). As a class, in small groups, or individually, have students share what they already know about the given topic. Then, encourage students to write questions expressing what they want to learn about the topic. Use these responses to inform your teaching. At the conclusion of instruction, revisit the KWL charts and have students record what they learned, as well as anything they still want to learn, about the topic.

