# Formative Assessment Strategies – Practical Guide for Trainee Teachers

This guide provides you with a number of formative assessment techniques that you can use in your classrooms. Each entry explains what the strategy is, how to use it in practice, and why it supports pupil learning.

## Learning Objectives (LOs)

**What it is**: Clear statements of what pupils should learn by the end of a lesson.

**How to use it:** Share the LO at the start of the lesson, ensure that pupils understand its meaning and refer back to it regularly to help pupils stay focused on the intended learning.

**Purpose:** Helps pupils understand what success looks like and take ownership of their progress.

## Success Criteria

**What it is:** A breakdown of the small, specific steps pupils need to meet the learning objective.

**How to use it:** Display 3–5 ‘Can I...?’ statements on the board and encourage pupils to check their work against them during the lesson.

**Purpose:** Gives pupils a clear checklist for success and supports self- and peer-assessment.

## Tell Me

**What it is:** A quick technique that asks pupils to explain a process or idea aloud.

**How to use it:** After modelling a task, ask: ‘Tell me what I need to do next’ or ‘Tell me the steps for success.’

**Purpose:** Encourages verbal reasoning and makes pupils think through the learning process.

## Do It Wrong / Do It Wrong Again

**What it is:** A playful method where the teacher deliberately makes mistakes.

**How to use it:** Model an example that includes errors and ask pupils to spot and correct them together.

**Purpose:** Helps pupils identify misconceptions and understand what accurate work looks like.

## Peer Assessment

**What it is:** Pupils review and comment on each other’s work against agreed criteria.

**How to use it:** Provide a model or checklist, remind pupils to be kind and specific, and guide them in how to give constructive feedback.

**Purpose:** Builds awareness of quality work and develops evaluative and critical thinking skills.

## Three Stars and a Wish

**What it is:** A peer- or self-assessment activity using three positives and one target for improvement.

**How to use it:** Ask pupils to give three things that went well (‘stars’) and one thing to work on (‘wish’).

**Purpose:** Keeps feedback positive and focused, promoting growth rather than criticism.

## Feedback Sandwich

**What it is:** A structured way of giving feedback with praise-advice-praise.

**How to use it:** Start with something that went well, give one area for improvement, and finish with another positive point.

**Purpose:** Encourages constructive feedback and helps pupils receive critique with confidence.

## Plenary Pals

**What it is:** A pupil-led plenary activity where learners reflect on what they achieved.

**How to use it:** Choose one or two pupils to summarise the lesson using the LO and success criteria, then invite class discussion.

**Purpose:** Reinforces learning and builds pupil confidence in explaining their understanding.

## Swap It

**What it is:** A fun reversal activity where pupils assess the teacher’s example.

**How to use it:** Model a piece of work or solve a problem with planned mistakes and invite pupils to ‘mark’ it.

**Purpose:** Deepens understanding by having pupils apply success criteria from the assessor’s point of view.

## Peer Smiley Faces

**What it is:** A visual feedback tool using smiley and sad faces.

**How to use it:** Pupils place a happy face next to a strong part of their peer’s work and a sad face next to an area for improvement. Suitable technique for younger learners.

**Purpose:** Makes peer feedback simple, visual, and accessible - especially for younger pupils.

## Give Me the Answer

**What it is:** A questioning strategy that reverses roles so that pupils invent the questions.

**How to use it:** Provide an answer (e.g. ‘Henry VIII’) and ask pupils to come up with a matching question.

**Purpose:** Develops creative and critical thinking by getting pupils to consider reasoning and context.

## Self-Assessment

**What it is:** When pupils evaluate their own work using criteria or reflective prompts.

**How to use it:** Encourage pupils to rate their confidence or tick which success criteria they met before submitting work.

**Purpose:** Builds independence and helps pupils identify their own next steps for improvement.

## Thumb-o-meter

**What it is:** A quick check of understanding using a thumbs-up/down/sideways signal.

**How to use it:** Ask pupils to close their eyes and show thumbs up (understand), sideways (partly), or down (don’t understand).

**Purpose:** Gives instant feedback so you can adapt teaching immediately.

## Traffic Lights

**What it is:** Colour-coded cards used for self-assessment (green = confident, amber = unsure, red = struggling).

**How to use it:** Pupils display or change their card colour as their understanding improves during the lesson.

**Purpose:** Provides a clear, visual overview of class progress and supports differentiation.

## Star Ratings

**What it is:** A rating scale (1–3 stars) for pupils to assess their understanding.

**How to use it:** At the end of a task, ask pupils to give themselves one, two, or three stars based on how confident they feel.

**Purpose:** Helps pupils reflect on their learning and lets you spot who may need extra support.

## Bouncing

**What it is:** A questioning method where answers are ‘bounced’ between pupils.

**How to use it:** Ask one pupil for an answer, then pass it to another to expand or challenge it (‘Can you build on that?’).

**Purpose:** Extends learning through dialogue and keeps all pupils actively engaged.

## Exit Poll

What it is: A reflective end-of-lesson check using written responses.

**How to use it:** Give pupils a slip of paper to write one thing that they learned, one thing that they found difficult and one thing that they would like to know more about.

**Purpose:** Provides feedback on learning and helps inform your next lesson’s planning.

## One-Minute Summary

**What it is:** A rapid written reflection task.

**How to use it:** Ask pupils to summarise the main learning point from the lesson in one minute or three sentences.

**Purpose:** Encourages concise reflection and reinforces key learning.

## Clear as Mud

**What it is:** A reflection activity for identifying confusion or gaps.

**How to use it**: Ask pupils to jot down anything that still feels ‘muddy’ or unclear after the lesson.

**Purpose:** Highlights misconceptions and informs future teaching focus.

## Self-Evaluation

**What it is:** A deeper reflection on how learning took place, not just what was learned.

**How to use it:** Use prompts like ‘What has challenged me?’ or ‘What helped me learn best?’ to promote metacognition.

**Purpose:** Develops self-awareness and helps pupils become reflective, independent learners.

## Rolling Marking

**What it is:** Ongoing formative marking of selected pupils’ work during lessons.

**How to use it:** Rotate who receives detailed marking each time, while others complete peer or self-assessment.

**Purpose:** Makes marking manageable and ensures consistent formative feedback for all pupils.

## Peer Marking

**What it is:** Pupils mark each other’s work using agreed success criteria.

**How to use it:** Provide a model answer or checklist and guide pupils to focus on learning goals, not grades.

**Purpose:** Encourages collaboration, accountability, and deeper understanding of assessment standards.

## On the Hunt

**What it is:** A reflective search activity using success criteria.

**How to use it:** Ask pupils to look through their own work and highlight where they’ve met specific criteria.

**Purpose:** Builds self-awareness and promotes independent evaluation of learning evidence.

## Detailed Marking with Feedforward

**What it is:** Written marking that includes both praise and a ‘next step’ for learning.

**How to use it:** Write feedback that ends with an action task or question for pupils to complete in the next lesson related to the learning objective.

**Purpose:** Turns marking into a learning opportunity by directing pupils towards measurable improvement.

## Whiteboards

**What it is:** Small boards pupils use to show answers instantly.

**How to use it:** Pose a question, give thinking time, then say ‘Show me!’ for everyone to reveal their answers at once.

**Purpose:** Provides immediate feedback on class understanding and encourages full participation.