

The Early-Term Diagnostic Assessment

The first few weeks of term are a golden opportunity to understand your new classes. A quick, low-stakes diagnostic assessment gives you the data you need to plan effectively and support every student from the outset.

Why Use a Diagnostic? (It's not just another test)

- **Inform Your Planning:** Identify class-wide knowledge gaps from last year before you start a new topic.
- **Early Intervention:** Pinpoint which students might need extra support or extension work right away.
- **Build Relationships:** Shows students you are interested in what they already know and where they need help.
- **Save Time Later:** Addressing misconceptions early prevents problems down the line.

Quick Diagnostic Ideas (5–15 Minute Activities)

- **The Mini Whiteboard Quiz:** Ask 5–7 key questions based on foundational knowledge from the previous year. It's fast, engaging, and gives you an instant visual of the whole class's understanding.
 - **The "Brain Dump" Sheet:** Give students a blank A4 page with a core concept in the middle (e.g., "Photosynthesis" or "Solving Equations"). Give them 5 minutes to write down every key word, fact, and formula they can remember about it.
 - **The Concept Cartoon:** Present a simple diagram with a common misconception. For example, a picture of a tree with the question, "Where does most of the tree's mass come from? The soil, the water, or the air?" This quickly reveals deeper misunderstandings.
- The Self-Assessment Traffic Light:** Provide a list of 10 key topics from the previous year. Ask students to mark each one **Red** (*I don't remember this*), **Amber** (*I'm a bit unsure*), or **Green** (*I feel confident with this*).

What to Do With the Results (The 3-Step Action Plan)

[] Step 1: Identify the Big Picture

- What is the #1 misconception across the whole class?
 - *Action:* Plan to re-teach this concept in a new way during your first topic.

[] Step 2: Group for Support

- Based on the results, list 3–5 students who might need targeted support.
 - *Action:* Plan a short, small-group intervention for them in the coming weeks.
- List 3–5 students who showed strong mastery and may need extension tasks.
 - *Action:* Prepare a challenge activity for them for your next topic.

[] Step 3: Keep it Low-Stakes

- Remember to praise effort, not just correct answers.
 - *Action:* Thank the class for their hard work and explain how their answers will help you plan great lessons for them this year.

