

Information sheet

Strategies for checking and reviewing learning

If learners are to achieve their learning goals and develop new skills and knowledge, teachers and trainers must evaluate the learning that has taken place and plan what needs to be achieved. In practice, this is managed by regularly checking.

Checking and reviewing enables the teacher or trainer to differentiate effectively, ensuring that the needs of individual learners are met. It helps them spot when learners are experiencing difficulties so that suitable support can be provided. It also allows teachers or trainers to challenge learners to make sure that they are developing to their full potential.

Aims of this topic

This section explores checking and reviewing in more detail:

- what checking and reviewing means;
- why you should do it;
- who can contribute to the checking and reviewing process;
- when is the best time to check and review;
- how you should check and review.

Think about how you currently check and review the progress of your learners:

- What checking and reviewing learning strategies do you use?
- How often do you check and review?
- How effective is your strategy?

What is checking and reviewing?

Checking and reviewing is a means by which a teacher or trainer can determine what has been learnt. It also enables the teacher or trainer to review and extend learning in a variety of ways, encouraging all learners to achieve their potential. Checking and reviewing learning can therefore be used in two distinct ways:

1. To check for learning.
2. To promote learning.

The role of questions in checking and reviewing learning

As a teacher or trainer, you will have used questioning techniques to support your learners and help them to develop new skills and knowledge. You will also have used questions to promote a deeper and broader understanding of a topic. Questions are also an important tool in the checking and reviewing process. They help learners understand the concepts being while enabling the teacher or trainer to identify what the learner knows, and what needs to be taught.

Your knowledge of each learner, acquired through checking and reviewing, will help you to plan appropriate questions and challenges for individual learners.

Importance to the teacher or trainer

Checking and reviewing learning is important to the teacher or trainer because it:

- _ enables them to determine what has been learnt and what needs to be addressed before moving on;
- _ helps them evaluate effectiveness of teaching strategies to ensure that they meet the needs of all learners;
- _ allows them to use feed back information to adapt or refine teaching and learning approaches and activities;

Teachers and trainers often do not invest enough time in planning checking and reviewing strategies when writing session plans.

Importance to the learners

Checking and reviewing learning is important to the learner because it:

- _ provides them with vital information, enabling them to be more independent and understand how to improve their learning;
- _ forms a key part of the learning process (it develops and enhances learning as well as 'checking' that it has taken place);
- _ can be motivating (if carried out effectively);
- _ enables learners to take an active part in the learning process.

Who should check and review?

There are many people who can contribute to effective checking and reviewing processes.

Teacher or trainer checking and reviewing

The teacher or trainer clearly has the ultimate responsibility for judging the level of learning, which has taken place. This will be achieved using a range of approaches and methods.

Self-checking and reviewing

Self-review and checking can provide vital information for both the learner and the teacher or trainer. It can be particularly effective for checking and reviewing knowledge (for example recalling facts or lists).

Peer checking and reviewing

This can be used to encourage learners to carefully consider answers given by their peers. In doing so learners will consolidate and extend their own knowledge and understanding of the topic while developing wider key skills. The group can design their own method to score answers against an agreed set of criteria. Alternatively learners could create an activity, such as a quiz or board game, to check understanding and application of knowledge to their work-placement. Learners may support each other by re-phrasing questions enabling their peers to more readily understand what is being asked.

Participative review activities are designed to allow every learner to participate in a non-threatening way. They keep the retention of information high and allow the possibility of this information being transferred to new contexts.

When to check and review

“Trying to learn without reviewing is like trying to fill the bath without putting the plug in.”

(Mike Hughes, *Closing the Learning Gap*, Network Educational Press, 1999)

The question of frequency and timing of checking and reviewing should be carefully considered.

Teachers and trainers should build in opportunities to check and review learning during the session as well as repeating the process at regular intervals after the original learning experience has taken place. This will help cement the new knowledge and information into the long-term memory.

It is vital that teachers and trainers build a range of formal and informal ways of evaluating the level of learning for each individual during each aspect of the session.

This formative approach allows teachers and trainers to adapt approaches accordingly.

Teachers and trainers should make certain that they allocate sufficient time at the end of a session to consolidate and review learning. This will ensure that learning is retained, but more importantly, it will help to identify which learners have grasped each of the learning outcomes.

How to check and review

There is a wide variety of methods and approaches which you can use to check and review learning. The choice of method is likely to depend on the type of learning. Teachers and trainers should think carefully about what aspect of learning is being reviewed or checked. For example, a learner completing a quiz or crossword may demonstrate retention of facts and knowledge, but it would not provide an opportunity to check and review the learner's level of understanding or ability to apply the knowledge to another situation.

Methods of checking and reviewing

The chart below shows the main types of learning and appropriate ways to check and review each type.

Type of learning (based on Bloom's taxonomy)	Methods of checking and reviewing learning
Knowledge Learners are able to recall information, recite or list facts	Crossword; searchword; multiple-choice questions; produce a poster; write a list; direct questions, for example, "Who can tell me..?"; matching activity.
Comprehension Learners are able to describe things in their own words, giving examples, summarising or outlining basic key points.	Presentation to/with peers; direct questions, for example, "What are the top three things you would include if you were explaining this to a new member of staff?" or "Give me an example of..."
Application Learners are able to transfer knowledge learnt in one situation into another.	Role play or simulation to illustrate; case studies.
Analysis Learners are able to characterise the attributes of something, allowing it to be studied both separately and in relation to something else.	Reflective diaries/journals; discussion / debate; putting the case for and against, for example, the choice of observation method in a particular context.
Evaluation Learners are able to make judgements about what they have analysed.	Group discussions; reflective journals, addressing questions such as: "Discuss the relative merits of..", "What is the best option..?", "Why ...?"
Synthesis Learners are able to form a new argument, a forecast or prediction.	Written work or oral explanations demonstrating ability to draw on a range of theories/concepts and apply to practice.

Benjamin S.Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*, Longmans, London 1964

Here are some top tips to remember about checking and reviewing learning.

1. Use the knowledge of your individual learners to plan your strategies.
2. Plan strategies to check and review learning in every session plan.
3. Always check and review learning from the previous session before commencing the next session.
4. Ensure your strategies check individual learning effectively.
5. Involve the learners in the checking process.
6. Be creative when devising ways to check and review learning.
7. Be supportive to encourage uncertain/less confident learners.
8. Give clear constructive feed back to consolidate learning.
9. Provide opportunities to extend learning through appropriate use of questions.
10. Reflect on the effectiveness of your strategies in order to inform your future plans.