

# Assignments & Tests

## Giving Direction to Learning and Assessment

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### Introduction

In this lecture we will discuss the basic concepts and examples of assignments, tests and classroom assessment. Each school and teacher will have their own expectations to what types of assignments, tests, and assessment they prefer. This is something you as a teacher will have to learn and modify to your teaching style over time. Additionally, it is pertinent that discuss with your school and co-teacher(s) what type of curriculum you want to build. Finally, this lecture will try to accommodate participants at all levels but will focus mainly on participants new to teaching.

### The Bigger Picture

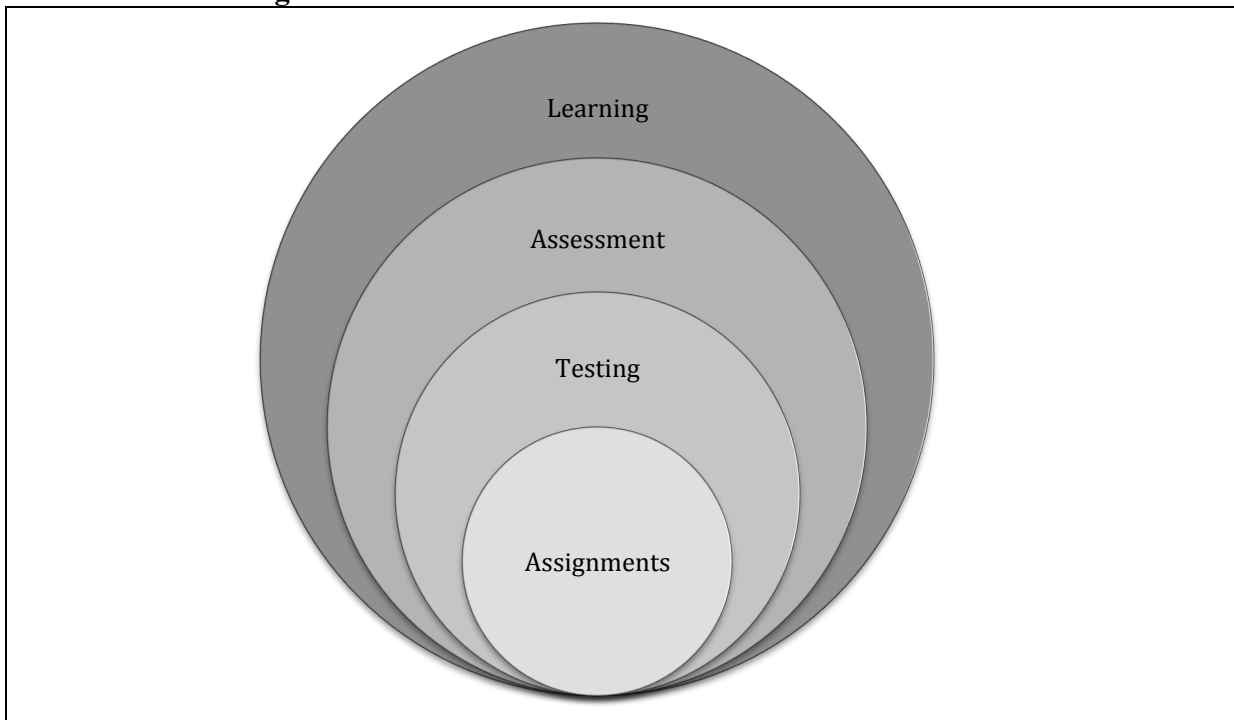
Assignments and tests are part of a much bigger picture in the role of learning. While assignments mostly deliver knowledge and tests check knowledge they both belong to assessment of the students' learning. Assessment is born out of a need for both student and teacher to be able to *monitor* and *evaluate* learning. From this need for classroom assessment we come to the modern purpose of assessment. **The purpose of classroom assessment is to improve how and what students learn and what methods teachers use.** Classroom assessment fulfills this need by allowing students and teachers to respond to information obtained from monitoring and evaluating student learning. This differs from grading because grading individually evaluates a student's learning and can incorporate criteria such as attendance, participation, or other means that may not directly measure learning. **Table 1.1** displays what classroom assessment can do for the student and the teacher.

**Table 1.1**

Classroom assessment can...	
Student	Teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identify prior knowledge</li><li>• identify strengths and weaknesses</li><li>• help in setting learning goals</li><li>• show how to motivate</li><li>• can help in understanding themselves as learners</li><li>• can help in understanding the learning process</li><li>• measure learning progress and attainment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching</li><li>• help in setting goals and objectives</li><li>• tell how and what to assess</li><li>• show fairness and objectivity of assessment</li><li>• inform and guide teaching and learning</li><li>• assign grades</li><li>• monitor student progress and attainment</li><li>• be used to develop oneself as a teacher</li></ul>

Assessment needs to be designed into your assignments and tests. Without assessment it will become easier for your students and yourself to lose learning objectives, goals, and purpose behind learning. Before discussing assignments and tests we need to understand the how assignments and tests fit into assessment and the classroom (**Table 1.2**).

**Table 1.2**  
**The Need For Assignments & Tests**



### **Types of Assessment**

Students do not all learn in the same way therefore we should not evaluate them all the same way. Contemporary classroom assessment has evolved towards assessment that **monitors** and **evaluates** the learning process for varying types of learners. Classroom assessment has grown beyond summative and formative assessments and now includes a third kind of assessment that is used as part of the learning process. These types of assessment in their modern form are essential for creating assignments and tests as well as a classroom conducive to learning. There are numerous classroom assessment strategies but all are classified under the three types; **assessment as learning**, **assessment for learning** (*formative assessment*), and **assessment of learning** (*summative assessment*) (Table 1.3).

**Table 1.3**  
**Types of Assessment and Hierarchy**

# ASSESSMENT

# LEARNING

**1. Assessment as learning (*self assessment*) develops students' awareness of learning and the thinking process (metacognition).**

Examples of assessment as learning include but are not limited to, discussions, critiquing, peer feedback, journals, portfolios, projects, and student created assessment.

**2. Assessment for learning (*formative assessment*) is an ongoing process and should be done day-to-day allowing teachers and students to modify or adjust teaching and learning by way of descriptive feedback.**

Examples of assessment for learning include but are not limited to, focused observations, questioning, informal/formal conversations, learning logs, and checklists.

**3. Assessment of learning (*summative assessment*) is the most traditional type of assessment in the classroom and provides evidence that students know and can do what was taught to them (accomplishing learner objectives).**

Examples of assessment of learning include but are not limited to exams, national tests, quizzes, final projects, report cards, and transcripts.

*Note: Although assessment for learning and assessment of learning have been associated with formative and summative assessment they can be mutually inclusive of each other. Some types of formative assessment (i.e. questioning or checklists) can be used as summative assessment and vice versa.*

Good classroom assessment directly affects the quality of your lesson. Below (**Table 1.4**) is a checklist for creating good classroom assessment; this checklist should be used whenever creating classroom assessment including assignments and tests.

**Table 1.4**

Checklist for creating good assessment	
Good assessment should...	Y/N
address specific learner objectives and outcomes	
help students set learning goals	

inform and guide teaching and learning	
be fair, pragmatic, valid, and reliable	
motivate students	
involve students and teachers	
identify strengths and weaknesses for students and teachers	
be able to provide both descriptive and quantifiable information on the progress that a student is making	
employ a variety of assessment strategies to provide evidence of student learning	
ensure students can describe their progress and achievement and articulate what comes next in their learning	
provide insight that can be used to modify instruction	
provide useful feedback and information about students	
be embedded in the learning process	

### Classroom Assessment Strategies

Classroom assessment strategies are numerous and as with any classroom method or technique, **they are best used as a framework**. Rarely does a strategy or technique work without being modified to match to match your situation. Some strategies will need only minor tweaking while some will need major modifications to work in your classroom. I invite you to explore this method of adapting strategies of all types in your classroom. Do not be deterred if something does not work... or many strategies do not work. **Everyone's classroom experience will be different**. If your students' levels are too low for a strategy, modify it to accommodate them. For example if you have lower level students who cannot write in English and you want to create learning logs, try having them make a happy or sad face next to English from the lesson that they do or do not know. **Our job as EFL teachers (English as a Foreign Language) in South Korea is to modify content and classroom techniques so that our students have the best possible chance for achievement.**

Assessment As Learning Strategies				
Name	Purpose	How to do it	How it's used	Time
<b>Learning Logs</b>	To have students record and reflect on what they have learned.	In a notebook have the students answer questions such as: <i>Today I learned...</i> <i>Next class I want to learn...</i> <i>Today was hard because...</i> <i>I didn't understand...</i>	Use every class, or once a week. Additionally have the students read over all of them for reflection.	Low-Medium
<b>Wall Posters</b>	To have the students self assess themselves and observe their progress	Have the students create posters that reflect what they learned. Have the students answer questions on the poster such as <i>Today I learned...</i> <i>I am good at...</i> <i>I need help with...</i> <i>I didn't like</i>	This can be done at the end of a unit as review or a project. Students will be able to see their progress in class and what they need to work on.	High
<b>Feedback Strips</b>	To learn how to give and receive peer feedback	On a small pre-made feedback sheet, have the students provide peer feedback for another student. Questions might include: <i>Today, you did well on...</i> <i>I liked your...</i>	Have students anonymously provide feedback for another student's observable actions such as a presentation, role-plays, or other oral presentations. Make sure the students are giving	Medium-High

		<i>I saw you... Next time try... One thing you could do better is...</i>	constructive feedback and make sure to model this beforehand.	
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### Assessment For Learning Strategies

Name	Purpose	How to do it	How it's used	Time
<b>Exit/ Admit Slips</b>	Used for assessing or understanding key concepts	Upon entering or exiting the classroom students will be given a slip of paper with a asked a question from the classes lesson. Students must answer the question correctly to be allowed in or out of the class.	This strategy can also be used as a classroom management technique or used to check knowledge or what materials they need to bring to the next class.	Low
<b>Graphic organizers</b>	To have students organize information that they know. To have the teacher observe what that student knows.	Students should record or display what they know from a concept by: -Venn Diagrams -Mid Maps -Chain of Events -Problem Solution -Cause and Effect	Graphic organizers can be used to assess what students know and do not know or how they make connection between concepts. Graphic organizers should be used when more structure or help is needed in problem solving	Medium-High
<b>Think Pair Share</b>	To have the student summarize information that they are learning through out class.	This is a 3 stage process: -Stage 1: the teacher asks the students to think about a problem or question. -Stage 2: students are paired together to discuss and agree on their answer. -Stage 3: students share their answer with the class.	This strategy can be used during or after a lesson or class. This strategy works well in any size of class especially in larger classrooms. Teachers can listen to the discussions to create formative assessment as well as give feedback and suggestions.	Medium-High
<b>Journals</b>	To have students create a descriptive log of their learning process	Student will keep journals and can be asked specific questions or allowed to write on their own. Additionally students can use or add journals to a portfolio. Furthermore journal can be used as part of observations.	This can be your choice from daily to weekly. Journals can be used as formative and or summative assessment.	Low-Medium
<b>Role-plays</b>	To have students create an environment in which they can show their understanding of concepts	Students will create a scene or skit in which they must use concepts or components of what they have learned in class.	This is one of the most used but underutilized assessment strategies. Most teachers use this to memorize contrived language. Using role-plays to help students create what they think is happening or what the language is can be insightful to understanding how they think.	Medium-High

### Assessment Of Learning Strategies

Name	Purpose	How to do it	How it's used	Time
<b>Exams/ Quizzes/ Tests</b>	To assess and assign a grade to students by way of	Create a test based on learner objectives and learned concepts. Questions must come	Exams are used at the classroom level all the way to state and country level	Low-High

	a performance based test	from material that has been learned.	exams. Students are compared to themselves and others to determine a quantifiable score.	
<b>Projects</b>	To have students create a representation of what they know	Students are asked to create content that is based on what they have learned. This can vary from day-day topics to summations of topics. Projects can vary from posters, oral presentations, podcasts, or even videos.	Projects can be used to create a summary or a synthesis of what students know. Projects are typically used at the end of a lesson or semester, as they can be time intensive.	High
<b>Oral Presentations</b>	To have the students recall orally what they know	Students are given a topic or script to speak from in which they must either complete or entirely create based on concepts that they have learned.	Although typically used at the end of a lesson or a term, oral presentations can be done frequently and encourage SLA	Medium
<b>Portfolio</b>	To have students collect and show evidence of what they have learned	Have students create a folder or by other means a history of their work. This usually consists of previous work such as worksheets, tests, and homework. Portfolios might also include journals and projects.	Students should upkeep their portfolio frequently and they should be checked at least once a term. Portfolios can be used as formative and or summative assessment.	High

## Rubrics

Rubrics are one of the most important tools a teacher can use for assessment. Rubrics can be used for summative or formative assessment. The ability to make a reliable and fair rubric is an invaluable skill that teachers must have. Rubrics provide teachers with a fair and measurable method for assessment as well as the ability to help students prepare assignments. There are numerous ways to create a rubric. The table below (**Table 1.8**) details an in-depth procedure to create a rubric. Not all rubrics must be as in-depth as this one but these steps are foundational to basic rubric creation. Honing your rubric creation skills and being able to create a fair and measurable rubric will provide not only a way for students to understand how they are being graded but also help you to avoid those uncomfortable situations when students ask, “Why did I get this grade?” or “Why did the other student get a good grade and I didn’t?” Finally, have students participate in rubric creation when possible as it shows that you care and value their opinions. Also, including them in the rubric creation process helps students learn to make good decisions that impact their grade and their learning process. Additional rubrics can be found on my blog and at the end of this manuscript.

**Table 1.8**

### Instructions for Creating a Rubric

**1. Choose an outcome for which you would like to create a rubric.**

**2. Determine which criteria are "non-negotiable". List these in a checklist. If you like, you can separate them by "process" and "product."**

**3. Determine and prioritize the criteria that will be evaluated for the outcome (search the Internet for rubrics that can be adapted).**

**4. Group any related criteria or determine if any criteria need to be broken down further into indicators.**

**Rubric for Assessing Chocolate Chip Cookies**

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Project title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Course name and number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Learning outcome:** Students will be able to bake a delicious chocolate chip cookie.

The cookies must...

- ✓ measure between 2 and 4 inches in diameter
- ✓ have been baked within 2 hours of this competition

		Level of Performance				Score	Weight	Subtotal (Score x Weight)
Criteria	Indicator	Delicious (4)	Tasty (3)	Edible (2)	Inedible (1)			
Chocolate chips	Quality	Highest quality dark chocolate	Highest quality milk chocolate	Standard commercial milk	Standard commercial dark		X 2	
	Number	Chocolate chip in every bite	Chips in about 75% of bites	Chocolate in 50% of bites	Too few or too many chips		X 2	
Texture		Chewy	Chewy in middle, crisp on edges	Texture either crispy / crunchy or 50% uncooked	Texture resembles a dog biscuit		X 2	
Color		Golden brown	Either light from overcooking or light from being 25% raw	Either dark brown from overcooking or light from undercooking	Burned		X 1	
Taste		Home-baked taste	Quality store-bought taste	Tasteless	Store-bought flavor; stale, hard, chalky; preservative after taste		X 2	
Richness		Rich, creamy, high-fat flavor	Medium fat contents	Low-fat contents	Nonfat contents		X 1	
<b>Total Score</b>								

Comments:

Level of Performance	Grade Scale
Exemplary: Delicious	A+ 90 - 100%
	A 85 - 89%
	A- 80 - 84%
Proficient: Tasty	B+ 75 - 79%
	B 70 - 74%
	B- 65 - 69%
Developing: Edible	C+ 60 - 64%
	C 55 - 59%
	D 50 - 54%
Beginning: Inedible	F 0 - 49%

Percent (divide total score from above by maximum possible score)

\_\_\_ / \_\_\_ x 100 = \_\_\_ %

Check one:

Self assessment

Peer assessment by \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor assessment by **ΔME**

**5. Develop a continuum of levels of performance (with the highest level of performance descriptors farthest to the left).**

**6. Weight (optional): Determine the relative weight of criteria / indicators (usually 1-4).**

**7. Descriptors: Write a brief definition for the criteria you identify. Start by describing the best and worst levels of performance. Avoid using positive or negative comments.**

**8. Calculate the maximum possible score.**

From: <http://www.nwic.edu/assessment/AssessmentResources/rubrics/InstructionRubric.pdf>

## The Role of Assignments and Tests

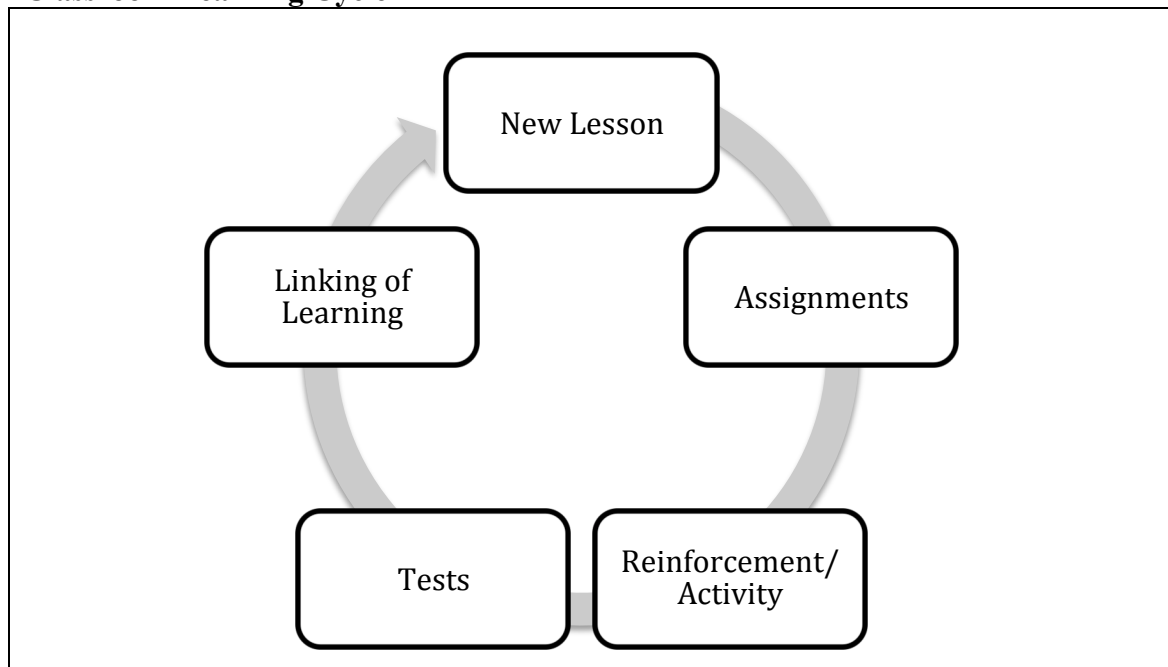
Assignments and tests play specific roles in the classroom. They can deliver instruction, dictate learning, monitor, and evaluate learning. These roles mostly fall under assessment of student learning. Below (Table 1.5) we can see specific roles that assignments and tests play in the role of learning.

**Table 1.5**

Roles & Functions	Assignments	Tests
	Teach how to study, learn, and how work is to be done	Assess students' knowledge and progress
	Give explicit goals and expectations to work towards	Give assessment of learning (summative assessment)
	Connect learning	Provide points or achievement grades
	Move towards learner autonomy	Compare student's learning to other students

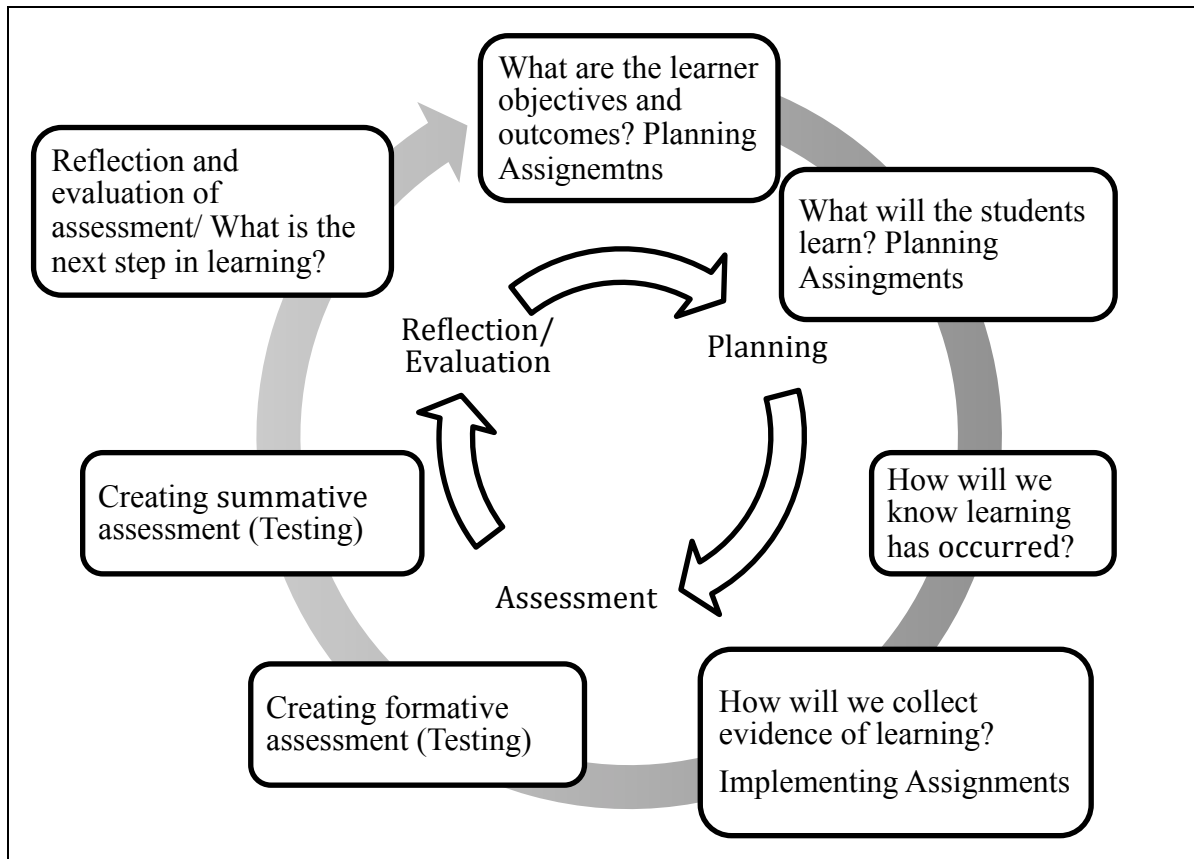
The role of assignments and tests are part of an intricate cycle that you must develop in your class. This cycle will dictate how learning is achieved in your classroom. Although there are numerous recommendations and models this is something you will have to develop as a teacher. Below (**Table 1.6**) is a model of how assignments and tests fit into the learning process in your classroom. Table 1.7 shows a more detailed cycle of assignments, tests, and assessment in the classroom.

**Table 1.6**  
**Classroom Learning Cycle**



**Table 1.4**  
**Process of Classroom Assessment**





## Types of Assignments and Tests

Although every school and classroom is different, here in South Korea you will be primarily in charge of teaching speaking. This should not limit you to only teach speaking. Part of a good learning EFL environment is teaching and linking all parts of a language in order to learn it. In this next section we will cover examples of assignments and tests for speaking, listening, writing, reading, and vocabulary. Use these examples as a template or a framework to build your assignments and tests. Rarely does an example work immediately. You will have to modify these to fit your classroom. Additionally you will observe that many of these examples overlap and cross between assignments and tests. This is a good thing as it can link between the knowledge, content, and manner in which you teach and can allow for a more cohesive learning experience.

## Speaking Assignments and Tests

Speaking assignments and tests should teach, allow practice, and assess students' ability to speak in their L2 (second language) and ultimately to create authentic language.

1. **Q & A-** Ask questions during the lesson to check comprehension and listen for students' English levels.
2. **Role plays-** Have students create and act out situations from the lesson. Students must use content from the lesson.
3. **Interviews/ Surveys-** Have students interview each other or have the teacher ask questions in order to assess the students speaking ability.

4. **Songs & Chants** - Either have students learn a song or create a song with content from the lesson.

### **Listening Assignments and Tests**

Listening assignments and tests should teach, allow practice, and assess students' ability to listen and comprehend in the L2.

1. **Dictation (Cloze Tests)**- Students listen and fill in the blanks. Typically there is no word bank in order to tests the students listening ability.
2. **Jigsaw pictures** - Students must listen and put together pictures in the correct order. Most often you see this with stories but it can be done with content such as prepositions, colors, or numbers.
3. **Follow the directions** - Similar to jigsaw activities but involves TPR (Total Physical Response) in which the students must complete a task in order to show comprehension.
4. **Video & Qs** - Students watch videos and must either answer verbal or written questions.

### **Writing Assignments and Tests**

Writing assignments and tests should teach, allow practice, and assess the students' ability to write in the L2.

1. **Dictation (Cloze Tests)**- As with listening Cloze activities students fill in the blank but there is typically a word box/bank from which students can select the correct answer.
2. **Answer questions/ Sentence response** - Students must answer questions or respond to sentences from the lesson in writing.
3. **Story writing** - Students must write a story based on the lesson content. Students can share, illustrate, or act out their story for further reinforcement.
4. **Comics**- Students can fill in the blanks or create their own comics involving the lesson content.
5. **Posters**- Students can create posters that show what they have learned from the lesson.

### **Reading Assignments and Tests**

Reading assignments and tests should teach, allow practice, and assess students' ability to read and comprehend what is read in the L2.

1. **Comprehension Questions** - Students answer comprehension questions based on the reading they have covered in the lesson.

2. **Jigsaw Pictures-** Similar to the listening jigsaw activity but students put pictures together in the order of the story that was read.
3. **T &F** - Students answer T& F questions in response to the reading covered in the lesson.
4. **Acting-** Students must re-create and act out what they have read in the lesson. This is similar to role-playing.

### **Vocabulary Assignments and Tests**

Vocabulary assignments and tests should teach, allow practice, and assess students' vocabulary in the L2.

1. **Picture matching-** Students must match the word to the picture or vice versa.
2. **Translation** - Students must translate the word from L1 to L2 or vice versa.
3. **Definitions** - Students must write a definition for a word.
4. **Synonyms/ Antonyms** - Students must write a similar or opposite word for the vocabulary given.

### **Tips for Assignments and Tests**

You may not give assignments and tests in the traditional sense of the word. Many schools expect activities rather than traditional lessons in the NET's (Native English Teacher) class and may not ask you to formally test the students. This does not mean that your class should be void of assignments and tests. Remember the nature assignments and tests lay in assessment. It is your job to assess the students learning. How you create and implement the assignments and test is largely up to you. Assignments have a goal, purpose, and specific learning outcome. This is what defines assignments from just activities that cover content. Even if you asked to just have the students listen to you speak, make sure that it has a learning goal and that you can assess the students. Testing can be something simple as asking students a question as they enter or leave the class, having them create a poster with a set of criteria. Even though it may not be your job to give the students a grade it is still your responsibly as a teacher to make sure that they students have the best opportunity that you can provide to learn and experience English.

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