

ASSESSMENT · ADULT CPD

Formative vs Summative  
Assessment

Staff handout for INSET

The simple distinction

Formative vs Summative — at a glance

Aspect	Formative	Summative
Purpose	Adjust teaching	Record learning
When	During teaching	After teaching
Frequency	Many times per lesson	End of unit / term / year
Recorded?	Mostly not	Yes — for reporting
Audience	Teacher (and pupil)	Parents, SLT, LA, DfE
Examples	Mini-whiteboards, questions, exit tickets	End-of-unit test, SATs, EYFS Profile
Time cost	Low — embedded in teaching	Higher — interrupts teaching



Five formative techniques worth using

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Five summative techniques worth using

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The 'we test too much' debate

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### What to do with the data

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### What this means for your classroom

- Use formative techniques in every lesson — questioning, whiteboards, exit tickets
- Don't make summative tests more than once a half-term per subject
- When you do summative, make sure it ACTUALLY informs reporting / intervention
- Don't formal-test anything you can teacher-assess
- Keep formative LIGHT — it shouldn't feel like a test to children
- Use summative results for PROGRESS, not as a stick
- Record summative; don't bother recording most formative
- If you find yourself collecting data nobody uses, stop collecting it

