**Ten of the Best Digital Formative Assessment Tools**

**Introduction**

Assessment of students is a necessity. It measures how much students have learnt on a topic up to a particular point in time, to see if they are meeting standards set. The typical kind of assessment that we think of is a summative assessment which could be a final year exam or final year project. This type of assessment aims to gauge the students’ success in meeting the learning criteria set out in a particular subject or module. The result of the assessment is used to quantify achievement, it provides students, their parents and teachers with a grade for the end of a module, term or year.

The importance of summative assessment is undoubtable. Sometimes it can become a race for teachers to get through the curriculum, and they may do this without confirming that the pupils understand the material before moving on. A lack on interaction with the class is a part of the problem as without it, teachers cannot know if they really understand the topic. This is where formative assessment comes in. It is not the assessment of learning but assessment for learning.

**What is Formative Assessment?**

Formative assessment refers to the methods that teachers use to conduct evaluations and collect information on students understanding, learning needs and progress in a subject, as the lesson is going on. These assessments are informal and do not count towards any module grade. The purpose of formative assessment is to contribute to learning by providing the teacher with feedback on how the lessons are going. The results can be used to see how successful the teaching method is, allowing the teacher to adjust material as they go in order to better meet students’ needs, as well as to plan successive lessons. This ensures that students understand before moving on to the next topic. Hence the students will be better prepared for their summative assessments. As well as informing the teacher on how well students are understanding a topic, formative assessment can also help the students to understand their own strengths and weaknesses in the topic, which can encourage them to take responsibility of their own progress.

**10 Digital Tools for Formative Assessment**

Formative assessment is not a new concept but has been made so much easier in recent years by technology and is more accessible than you think. There are many more digital formative assessment tools that could have been mentioned here, but these 10 made the list due to their uniqueness, user-friendliness or their functions.

1. [Lino](http://en.linoit.com/%20)

A commonly used formative assessment method is admitting tickets, where the students leaves a comment on a sticky note about the lesson as they leave the classroom. Lino is just an online version of that! A virtual sticky notes application, where teachers can register and create a canvas for students to post sticky notes commenting on their comprehension of a topic. The canvas can be “public”, “private” or accessible to “friends” only. The “friends” option is advisable for use in the classroom as it means only the students registered accounts will be able to see and post on it. It is accessible from any web browser, so students can post in the classroom if you are looking for real time feedback, or they can post comments when they are at home, giving the teacher points on how to amend the material for the next lesson.

2. [ZipGrade](https://www.zipgrade.com/)

ZipGrade is an app that is available on the iPad or iPhone. What it does is it corrects multiple choice tests just by scanning the answer sheet using the camera on either Apple device. It can grade the whole class’s quizzes in minutes, saving valuable class time and providing results on what the students know, so the teacher can decide whether or not another day’s work is needed for the lesson. It provides results on the overview of the class as well as being able to see what questions individual students answered correctly or incorrectly. An advantage to this app is that students do not need to complete the quiz on an electronic device, as not all student have access to them, yet you do not have to spend time correcting them manually. The app lets you grade the first 100 tests for free but it must be purchased for £7.99 to grade any more. I think ZipGrade is definitely worth downloading to try it out and can then be purchased if it noticeably improves the grading experience.

3. [Popplet](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/popplet/id374151636?mt=8%20http://popplet.com/)

Popplet can be described as a graphic organiser. It can be used by anyone who wants somewhere to jot down ideas and organise them visually into a mind map, graph or mood board. But for formative assessment, the mind mapping or brainstorming tool is particularly useful. It helps students think and learn visually while the teacher can use the mind maps created as a visual representation of their understanding of the particular topic. It is available on the web and as an app on an iOS device. You can create Popplet boards and access them from either website or app platform and it’s free.

4. [Socrative](http://www.socrative.com/index.php)

Socrative, similar to Popplet, enables a student’s understanding of a topic to be visualised. You can create quizzes for the class to complete on any internet device, laptop, tablet or smartphone. The teacher can create a free account and access it through the teacher app, whereas the class access it through a student specific app. The teacher directs the students to a web address where they log their answers to the quiz. Receive instant results and view reports of their understanding, which saves you time so that you can engage with students that need more attention. The reports can be viewed in different ways depending on whether you want to see a whole class overview, a specific students results or access the classes understanding question by question. Socrative has the bonus feature of allowing users to share quizzes with their colleagues. Available through web browser or an app. It is available to download from the Apple App Store, Chrome Web Store and Google Play for Android devices.

5. [Stick Pick](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.buzzgarwood.stickpick&hl=en%20)

This app is for iOS and Android devices and costs £1.98, which is a relatively low cost for an app that could make your life that bit easier. With Stick Pick you can set up an account and create as many classes as you need. Within your classes you enter the names of your students and these visually appear on sticks in soup cans. Just shake the device or tap the screen and Stick Pick will pick a student randomly to answer a question. You can always choose the student yourself if you need to. You then tap on the correct, incorrect or comment button depending on the students answer. This is a great tool as it can link question systems to the needs of each students, as Stick Pick records the information put in by the teacher, it then uses that information to select students to answer questions on topics that they need to improve on. Another great feature for formative assessment in this app is the ability of the teacher to rate each student’s answer by selecting 0-5 on a critical thinking rubric or an elaboration rubric. All of which will be taken into consideration when choosing which student to ask which question.

6. [Infuse Learning](http://teacher.infuselearning.com/register/index.lasso)

Infuse Learning is a website that makes it extremely easy for teachers to track student understanding. Using the site to build assessments and quizzes or shorter true/false questions for students to complete on their tablet, computer or even their smart phone, the teacher will get instant results and therefore be able to gauge the level of understanding. It is user friendly for both teachers and students; you set up an account and let the students enrol in your course using a classroom code and their name. Infuse Learning doesn’t cost anything to use.

7. [Kahoot](https://getkahoot.com/)

Kahoot is another website that encourages interaction with the class by using game-like quizzes. Questions and answer choices are projected onto a screen in the classroom, and students submit their answers using their own internet devices. It works particularly well at capturing the attention of the class as it uses bright colours and music that adds to the suspense of the quiz. It is designed so that scores are not recorded making every game a new winnable opportunity and only the top 5 high scores in the class are displayed at the end. This brings out the competitive side in students and ensures that low scorers do not get discouraged. To design your own quiz you will need to set up a free account, whereas no account is needed to use the public quizzes. An Excel sheet of the information on student answers to the quizzes can be downloaded. This is the one drawback to Kahoot as if the teacher wanted to view the growth patterns or individual students or the class as a whole, they will have to manually organise the data from the past quizzes on that topic. Despite this time consuming disadvantage, Kahoot will no doubt get the students to engage and assist the teacher in finding out who may be struggling on the topic.

8. [Collaborize Classroom](http://www.collaborizeclassroom.com/)

This free tool combines a social media like approach with a discussion board. It is a safe, password-protected online community for students to continue their in-class discussion outside of the classroom. Students that are less willing to speak out in class are more likely to express their opinion online. Teachers can post questions and set response options, multiple choice, yes/no, comment or even poll-based answers. The increased interaction will aid the teacher in finding out how well students grasp the topic. It also gives you the option to embed videos, or attach documents such as PDFs, Word documents and images that can enhance the students understanding. At the end of the discussion, results on the reflection and review of the topic are available to students and teachers. Student understanding and interaction is gauged. Just like popular social media sites, Collabroize Classroom contains a messaging feature that allows teachers to message specific students if they notice they are struggling.

9. [EDpuzzel](https://edpuzzle.com/)

EDpuzzl is a free and very user friendly video platform that teachers can use for formative assessments. A video can be taken from YouTube or another sharing site, you can then record your voice and insert audio notes throughout the video if necessary. Quizzes with immediate feedback after the video allows you to track their understanding and see where students are struggling. This is a fantastic tool for explaining hard to grasp concepts.

10. [Geddit](http://letsgeddit.com/)

Asking the class to raise their hand if they understand a topic is a technique that teachers sometimes use to gauge understanding. Geddit is basically an online version of that, without the obvious flaw; some students don’t understand a topic but pretend that they do as they are embarrassed to admit in front of the class. Geddit enables students to give their honest feedback on a topic in private and in real time by a ‘check-in’. Students rate their confidence level on what has been covered in class and teachers receive a colour coded visualisation of the results. On Geddit the teacher can also hold quizzes and the results from both the feedback and quiz can be compared, seeing each student’s confidence and their understanding side by side in the same colour coded format. I think this is a great app as it means students can admit if they are not ready to move onto the next topic, without the fear of judgement from the rest of the class. It can also be accessed through a web browser if preferable([Top 10 E-Safety Tips to Keep Children Safe Online)](http://www.ourict.co.uk/school-e-safety-tips-2015/).