

Checking learners' understanding



Do You
understand
Me?

What Is Checking for Understanding?

- Checking for understanding is an important step in the teaching and learning process.
- Unless you check for understanding, it is difficult to know exactly what students are getting out of the lesson. In fact, checking for understanding is part of a formative assessment system in which teachers identify learning goals, provide students feedback, and then plan instruction based on students' errors and misconceptions.

When should we check understanding?

- when we are introducing or revising new language (grammar or lexical items and functional expressions)
- when, during an activity, we realise that our learners haven't understood something. This could be, for example, a word in a reading text
- when we are giving instructions for an activity
- when we are correcting errors
- when feeding back for comprehension of a listening or reading activity

10 Ways to Check for Student Understanding



1. Avoid Yes/No questions.

- To help students grasp ideas in class, ask pointed questions that require students to use their own prior knowledge.



2. Ask students to reflect.

- During the last five minutes of class ask students to reflect on the lesson and write down what they've learned. Then, ask them to consider how they would apply this concept or skill in a practical setting.



3. Use quizzes.

The logo for Quizalize, featuring the word "Quizalize" in white text on a red rectangular background.

- Give a short quiz at the end of class to check for comprehension.

4. Ask students to summarize.

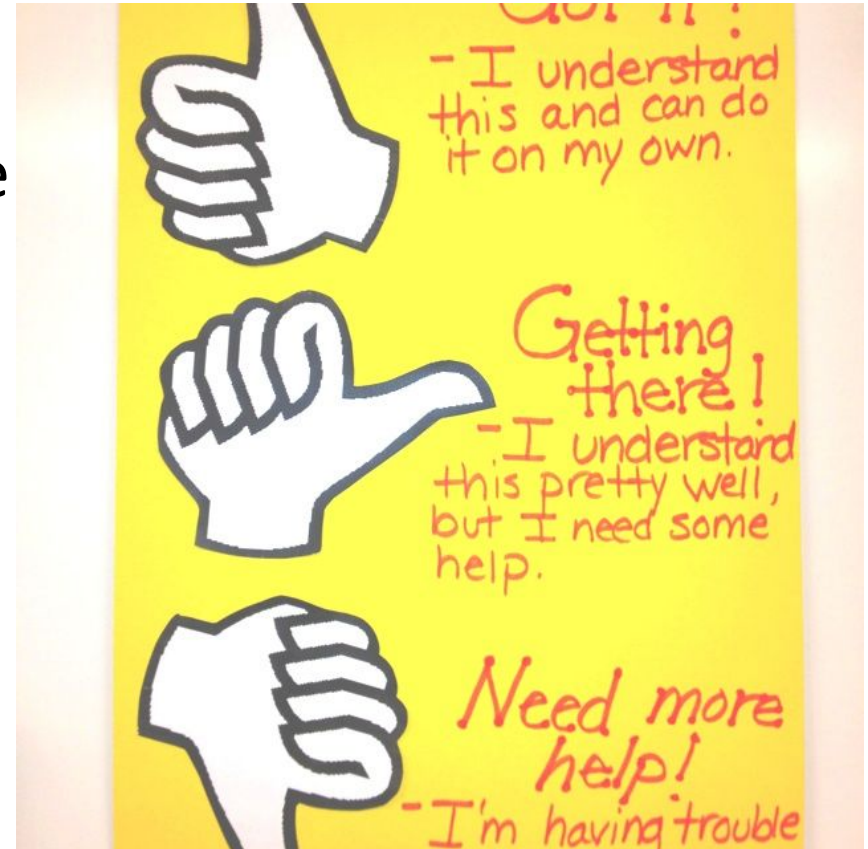
- Have students summarize or paraphrase important concepts and lessons. This can be done orally, visually, or otherwise.

5. Response cards.

- Index cards, signs, whiteboards, magnetic boards, or other items are simultaneously held up by all students in class to indicate their response to a question or problem presented by the teacher. Using response devices, the teacher can easily note the responses of individual students while teaching the whole group.

6. Hand signals.

- Hand signals can be used to rate or indicate students' understanding of content. Students can show anywhere from five fingers to signal maximum understanding to one finger to signal minimal understanding. This strategy requires engagement by all students and allows the teacher to check for understanding within a large group.



7. Think-pair-share.

- Students take a few minutes to think about the question or prompt. Next, they pair with a designated partner to compare thoughts before sharing with the whole class.



8. Ticket out the door.

- Students write in response to a specific prompt for a short period of time. Teachers collect their responses as a “ticket out the door” to check for students’ understanding of a concept taught. This exercise quickly generates multiple ideas that could be turned into longer pieces of writing at a later time.



9. Analogy prompt.

- Periodically, present students with an analogy prompt: “the concept being covered is like _____ because _____.”

10. Peer instruction.

- Perhaps the most accurate way to check for understanding is to have one student try to teach another student what she’s learned. If she can do that successfully, it’s clear she understood your lesson.