

# Understanding Adaptive Teaching

The Early Career Framework provides a helpful explanation of why Adaptive Teaching matters:

- Pupils are likely to learn at different rates and to require different levels and types of support from teachers to succeed.
- Seeking to understand pupils' differences, including their different levels of prior knowledge and potential barriers to learning, is an essential part of teaching.
- Adapting teaching in a responsive way, including by providing targeted support to pupils who are struggling, is likely to increase pupil success.

As far as possible, make curriculum do the work of determining learning objectives, assessment methods and likely barriers. A well-planned curriculum will reduce the teacher's need to make in-the-moment adaptations. When additional adaptations are necessary, note that the strategies below are illustrative, not exhaustive, and that adaptations will need considering from a subject-specific point of view.

For an overview of strategies which research evidence suggests can have a positive impact across phases and for all pupil groups, including those with SEND, see the EEF's '5-a-day' approach:

<https://bit.ly/EEF5aday>

Provide a measurable and challenging Learning Outcome and use Progression Steps to chunk progress towards that outcome

## ADAPTIVE TEACHING

### Anticipate barriers

- different levels of prior knowledge
- vocabulary
- a particular production skill such as writing
- a particular SEND
- decoding written text
- limited working memory
- cultural experience
- EAL
- a common misconception
- a lack of metacognitive knowledge or strategy
- inherent complexity of resources/information

NOTE: Don't confuse barriers with desirable difficulty and remove all challenge!

### Plan to address them

- read a text in advance
- supply background knowledge
- use pictures/video to contextualise upcoming information
- teach vocabulary
- introduce a concept via discussion
- teach necessary learning behaviour
- improve accessibility (e.g. clarity of resources, font size, proximity to speaker, visibility of whiteboard, reader pens)
- plan to scaffold
- prepare a model to share with, for example, a visualiser
- plan targeted support from a TA

TELLS US WHAT TO ASSESS

Assessment information informs subsequent planning and in-the-moment adaptations.

Other considerations:

How will you monitor responses? Does the assessment method itself create barriers?  
There's a trade-off between quality of information and practicality - be aware of this.

### Use assessment to elicit evidence of learning

- questioning
- tests
- production tasks (e.g. writing, setting up an experiment, painting, performing)
- talk
- hinge questions
- labelling diagrams
- answers on sticky notes or mini-whiteboards

### Examples of in-the-moment adaptations

- adjust the level of challenge
- change your language
- clarify a task or provide steps
- clarify what 'good' looks like
- highlight essential content
- re-explain a concept or explain it in a different way
- give additional (or revisit) examples and non-examples
- use peer tutoring
- elicit via questions
- allocate temporary groups provide an additional scaffold
- use assessment as a teaching method
- use an analogy
- set an intermediate goal
- provide a prompt
- structure a group attempt before an individual attempt
- improve accessibility (e.g. proximity to speaker, visibility of whiteboard, read a text to the student)

BEFORE TEACHING

DURING TEACHING