

# DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

## What is Diagnostic Assessment?

Diagnostic assessment provides teachers with baseline information about their students' prior knowledge and misconceptions about a particular topic before beginning a new unit of instruction. Knowing where your students are starting from will help inform your lesson planning, learning objectives, the success criteria that students will use to know how they're progressing toward their goals, and it will identify areas where you may need to spend more or less time on instruction (SERC, 2021; Pear Assessment Team, 2024). Furthermore, a diagnostic assessment provides teachers with an opportunity to determine if their students remember the concepts they need in order to move forward. If some students don't remember needed concepts, then the teacher can plan a refresher lesson that will make the next lesson more meaningful and improve the learning outcomes of their students (Wisconsin-Madison).

## Components of Diagnostic Assessment

- Take place at the beginning of a unit, lesson, quarter, or period of time (Pear Assessment Team, 2024)
- Used to understand the students' current knowledge of a topic to inform effective instruction (Pear Assessment Team, 2024)
- Identify strengths and areas of improvement for the students (Pear Assessment Team, 2024)
- Low-stakes (Pear Assessment Team, 2024)

## Benefits of Diagnostic Assessment

- Indicate students' prior knowledge (Wisconsin-Madison)
- Helps teachers adjust lessons and activities to encourage more effective learning (Wisconsin-Madison)
- The teaching and learning process becomes more effective and efficient when the teacher is able to zero in on content that needs to be retaught, reviewed, or has already been mastered (Wisconsin-Madison)
- Provides information about student misconceptions (Wisconsin-Madison)
- May motivate students to seek information and practice (Wisconsin-Madison)
- Demonstrates to students that their teachers care about them as people and about their success as learners (Wisconsin-Madison)

Resources:

*Diagnostic and Formative Assessment.* (2021, March 26). Science Education Resource Center at Carlton College (SERC). <https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/assessment/formative.html>

Pear Assessment Team. (2024, January 15). *A Guide to Types of Assessment: Diagnostic, Formative, Interim, and Summative.* Pear Deck Learning. <https://www.peardeck.com/blog/a-guide-to-types-of-assessment-diagnostic-formative-interim-and-summative>

Wisconsin-Madison, U. (n.d.). Diagnostic assessments: Assess prior knowledge. [https://courses.dcs.wisc.edu/design-teaching/PlanDesign\\_Fall2016/2-Online-Course-Design/3\\_Learning-Assessments/5\\_assessment\\_diagnostic.html](https://courses.dcs.wisc.edu/design-teaching/PlanDesign_Fall2016/2-Online-Course-Design/3_Learning-Assessments/5_assessment_diagnostic.html)