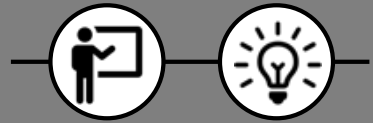


History How To's



Multiple Choice Questions

Greg Thornton
@mrthorntonteach



What are MCQs?

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) are a method of assessment that allow us to check knowledge and unpick misconceptions.



What does the research say?

Fletcher Wood argues that MCQ's are a powerful diagnostic tool, allowing teachers to make useful inferences about students' learning.

Willingham's research into retrieval practice has shown that repeated frequent quizzing is more effective in remembering than restudying. MCQ's offer this opportunity as part of the learning process.

Joe Kirby also points out the benefits on reducing workload but does acknowledge Christodoulou's point that *"they are very difficult to write"*, needing strong subject knowledge and time to get right.

Further Reading

Christodoulou: Making Good Progress
Fletcher Wood; Responsive Teaching
Harvard: The Effortful Educator

Using MCQ's in the classroom

Formative Assessment

- MCQs can be used within lesson as a tuning fork for student understanding
- This could low stakes testing such as a short 5 question 'Do Now' quiz or a hinge question during the lesson.

Summative Assessment

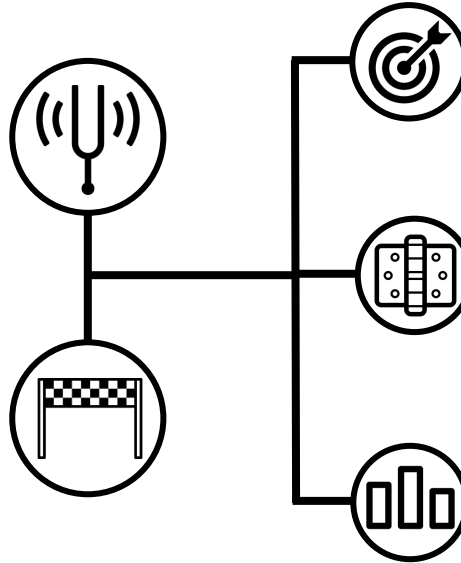
- Use them as end of unit assessment to test the breadth and depth of a unit
- A range of 20-50 questions which can provide you with precise feedback on student understanding

Do's and Don'ts

Follow these research led tips when designing your multiple choice questions



- Clear and concise question
- Offer 3-4 answer options
- Keep incorrect answers linked to the topic and use common misconceptions
- A questions should test a *single* skill or concept
- Give the option *'I don't know yet'* to avoid guesses
- Offer multiple correct answers to increase rigour
- The question stem should not confuse or gives clues
- Avoid using "all or non of the above" as options
- Incorrect answers must not be obviously wrong/silly
- The question should not be answered based on opinion
- Avoid using negative wording e.g. *'Louis Pasteur did NOT discover these'*



Best Answer

- Students pick the 'best' and 'least best' answer from a range of options, e.g. summarising a concept or explaining cause
- Students then explain how and why they chose these options.
- This gets students to apply and demonstrate their knowledge by interrogating each option

Hinge Questions

- After new content/concept is taught, the teachers poses an MCQ to the class which is answered on mini wipeboards
- The teacher can immediately see the level of understanding and misconception and then, either reteaches, or moves on

Ranking

- Ask students to rank the answer choice from most correct to least correct, and they explain *why* they made their decisions
- Students could also confidence rank these between options, on

In the History Classroom

Examples of how you could use MCQ's in the history classroom.



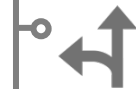
Source Questions MCQs can be used to 'chunk' down the individual components of source questions, which can be focussed on. For example inferences, provenance and source reliability.



Within the lesson Use MCQs as a starter or hinge question to see if students 'get' a concept after teaching it, especially one to have known misconceptions e.g. Pasteur's Germ Theory or Communism



Live Feedback Use MCQs as a 'live' formative assessment tool. Students complete a quiz online and teacher pauses throughout to tackle misconceptions and re-teach content/concepts



Breaking Tradition Can you replace a traditional essay with MCQ for a summative assessment? Test both the substantive knowledge and second order concepts (E.g. causation) through this instead