



Explanation

Any activity that assesses students' prior knowledge will help you to better structure your classroom activities and materials so that all students feel included regardless of their prior knowledge or lack thereof about the topic. "Determining what students already know allows you to: target knowledge gaps and misconceptions, become aware of the diversity of backgrounds in your classroom, and create a bridge between students' previous knowledge and new material" ("Assessing Prior Knowledge, n.d.).

Assessing students' prior knowledge and skill level can be accomplished in any course regardless of discipline. Such assessments can take many forms, and it's a good idea to try out a few to see which works best for your courses. Need some help selecting an assessment? Consider using one of the activities below.

1. Background Knowledge Probe: a diagnostic pretest that you can administer at the beginning of the course or when you begin a new course topic. This pretest can take a variety of formats (i.e., multiple choice, short answer, essay, etc.) and should be brief. See the following resources for ideas and tips for using background knowledge probes in your courses:



Nilson, L., & Goodson, L. (2018). *Online teaching at its best: Merging instructional design with teaching and learning research*. Jossey-Bass. **AVAILABLE THROUGH THE LEARNING ACADEMY LIBRARY**

Tobin, T., & Behling, K. (2018). *Reach everyone, teach everyone: Universal Design for learning in higher education*. West Virginia University Press. **AVAILABLE THROUGH THE LEARNING ACADEMY LIBRARY**

Weimer, M. (2021). Knowing what students don't know. *The Teaching Professor*. <https://www.teachingprofessor.com/?p=60695>