

Teachback

Learning by explaining what we have been taught

The teacher explains something about a topic to a learner. Then the learner tries to teach their new understanding back to the teacher. If the learner gives a good response, the teacher goes on to explain more about the topic. If the learner struggles to teach back, the teacher clarifies the explanation and the learner teaches it back until they reach a shared understanding.

Teachback can be used for any type of teaching and learning, including sports coaching, science teaching and language learning.

- Both teacher and student should gain from the conversation. Teachers explain their knowledge in a structured way and find out whether it is being understood. Students receive direct instruction and find any gaps in understanding by recalling and teaching back what has been taught.

- The process should be visible, with both teacher and student involved at each stage.
- There should be some way of checking students' new understanding, for example by applying what they have learned, or by completing a test or quiz.

With slight amendments to the bulleted points, teachback can also be used for students working at similar levels to explore a complex topic from different perspectives.

Teachback at a distance

Explain topic to learner.	Explanations can be recorded as audio or video, delivered live to a class using a tool such as Zoom or Adobe Connect, or written versions can be shared by text or email.
Learner teaches topic back to you.	In one-to-one situations, teachback can take place by telephone or in a live session using a tool such as Zoom or Adobe Connect. Otherwise, ask students to make a short video or audio recording, or send you a written explanation. Giving options makes it easier for students to engage if their Internet connection is not good.
If learner struggles to teach back, share another explanation with commentary.	Share another version of your explanation or share one of the good explanations submitted by other students. Add your own commentary about what makes this a good explanation.
Check understanding.	Ways of checking understanding include: asking students to share via audio/video/text how they have applied what they have learned, running an online quiz using a tool such as kahoot.com, circulating a list of questions to be answered, or asking all learners in the class to devise a test of understanding and then choosing one of those tests to use.

How did it go?

Let us know in the comments on the website www.open.ac.uk/blogs/innovating how teachback worked for you and your students. Please share any tips that others would find useful, or link to examples of good explanations.