



103 Ways to Check for Understanding

This is a compilation of various strategies found via education articles, blog posts, fellow teachers, and experience. We in no way claim to have authored the strategies, however we have authored the level of rigor for each.

Strategy	Description	Level of Rigor	
1.	Fist To Five/ Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down	Students communicate their level of understanding to teacher using their fingers. (Reflection)	Reflection (no rigor, should not be used to assess student knowledge or understanding)
2.	4-3-2-1 Scoring Scale	A posted scale that can be used either as a quick check with hand or a numerical value for students to self-assess on a written assessment.	Reflection-based with Low level rigor
3.	3-2-1	3 things you found out, 2 interesting things and 1 question you still have.	Low level rigor, recall/identify
4.	4 Roads	<p>Students choose a corner based on their level of expertise of a given subject. Based on your knowledge of _____ , which corner would you choose?</p> <p><i>Corner 1:</i> The Dirt Road–(There’s so much dust, I can’t see where I’m going! Help!!) <i>Corner 2:</i> The Paved Road (It’s fairly smooth, but there are many potholes along the way.) <i>Corner 3:</i> The Highway (I feel fairly confident but have an occasional need to slow down.) <i>Corner 4:</i> The Interstate (I ’m traveling along and could easily give directions to someone else.)</p> <p>Once students are in their chosen corners, allow students to discuss their progress with others. Questions may be prompted by teacher. Corner One will pair with Corner Three; Corner Two will pair with Corner for peer tutoring.</p>	Low level rigor to start but can advance for certain students based on questions posed and tutoring
5.	A-B-C Summaries	Each student in the class is assigned a different letter of the alphabet and they must select a word starting with that letter that is related to the topic being studied.	Low level rigor
6.	ABCD Whisper	Students should get in groups of four where one student is A, the next is B, etc. Each student will be asked to reflect on a concept a draw a visual of his/her interpretation. Then they will share their answer with each other in a zigzag pattern within their group.	Reflection-based, low level rigor but does require identification and interpretation
7.	Advertisement	Create an AD, with visuals and text, for the newly learned concept	Low level rigor as written. Can be mid-level with added criteria
8.	Anticipation Guide	Establish a purpose/focus for reading and create post-reading reflections and discussion.	Low level rigor, can be increased with post-reading requirements
9.	Ballad	Summarize a narrative that employs a poem or song structure that using short stanzas.	Low level rigor, recall and comprehension

10.	Bio Poem/Rap	To describe a character or a person, write a poem/Rap that includes: Line 1) First Name Line 2) 3–4 adjectives that describe the person Line 3) Important relationship Line 4) 2–3 things, people, or ideas that the person loved Line 5) 3 feelings the person experienced Line 6) 3 fears the person experienced Line 7) Accomplishments Line 8) 2–3 things the person wanted to see happen or wanted to experience Line 9) His or her residence Line 10) Last name	As written, low level rigor/ recall of information, however, added requirements can increase rigor
11.	Buddy Journal	Exchange notes with a partner and journal. This can be highlighting parts of the notes, searching for missing things, adding additional notes, or simply summarizing.	Low/Mid level rigor depending on the task/question for journaling
12.	Capacity Matrix	The capacity matrix is a charting technique used to break down topic areas into steps for achieving a specific result. It identifies tasks, knowledge levels, and understanding of the topic area.	Low level rigor, does require identification and understanding
13.	Circle, Triangle, Square	(Circle) Something that is still going around in your head. (Triangle) Something pointed that stood out in your mind. (Square) Something that “squared” or agreed with your thinking.	Reflection (no rigor, should not be used to assess student knowledge or understanding)
14.	Classroom TED Talk	Design and deliver a TED talk regarding using information from a lesson in a new way, “tell a story” and “Work the crowd” Redesign the information so that it is intriguing for an audience of peers.	Mid/High level rigor with the redesign
15.	Clickers	Electronic survey devices that give instant feedback and data.	Low level rigor with convergent questioning
16.	Collage	Create a collage (visual or text) around the lesson’s themes. Explain your choices in one paragraph.	Mid level rigor especially if they need to justify or defend their reason for what they included
17.	Color Cards	Red = Stop, I need help. Green = Keep going, I understand. Yellow = I’m a little confused.	Reflection-based, should not be used for assessment
18.	Compare and Contrast	Identify the theory or idea the author is advancing. Then Identify an opposite theory. What are the similarities or differences between these ideas?	Mid/high level of rigor
19.	Comic Strip	Design a comic strip to represent understanding. Creation tools like Bitstrips can be used.	Low/mid level of rigor, mainly showing comprehension
20.	Conference	A short, focused discussion between the teacher and student. Mini conferences can be used throughout the class to check for understanding	Reflection/low level rigor
21.	Cubing	Display 6 questions from the lesson Have students in groups of 4. Each group has 1 die. Each student rolls the die and answers the question with the corresponding number. If a number is rolled more than once the student may elaborate on the previous response or roll again. Responses may also be written	Low-high level rigor based on level of questioning

22.	Debrief	Reflect immediately after an activity. This can be a debrief between partners, groups, or journal writing. Ensure there are parameters of what should be discussed during the debrief.	Can be low to high level of rigor based on the parameters involved
23.	Decisions, Decisions	Given a prompt, class goes to the side that corresponds to their opinion on the topic, share out reasoning, and students are allowed to change sides after discussion.	Mid-level rigor, requires students to identify, understand, and justify
24.	Define	Pick out and important word or phrase that the author introduces. What does this word or phrase mean?	Low level rigor with recalling
25.	Describe	What are the important characteristics or features of the main concept or idea of the reading?	Low level rigor with comprehension
26.	Double Entry Notebook	Create a two-column table. Use the left column to write down 5–8 important quotations. Use the right column to record reactions to the quotations.	Low-Mid level rigor based on added expectations for the right column
27.	Dramatic Interpretation	Dramatize a critical scene from a complex narrative.	Low level rigor requiring comprehension
28.	Entrance/ Exit Ticket	Each student will be given a ticket to complete before leaving the room answering: what is the most important thing I learned today? What questions do I still have? These tickets can be given to the teacher when exiting the room or upon entering the room. The teacher uses this information to guide the instruction.	Reflection (no rigor, should not be used to assess student knowledge or understanding)
29.	Every Pupil Response	Each student receives a pink and yellow (colors can vary) card. Each color represents a specific response. Students raise the card to provide the correct response to a teacher directed question.	Low level rigor with convergent questioning
30.	Example/ Non-Example	Given a concept, students sort or write various examples/ non-examples.	Low-level rigor, requires identification
31.	Explain Your Solution	Describe how you solved an academic solution step-by-step.	Low level rigor recounting procedure
32.	Explaining	Explain the main idea using an analogy	Low level rigor requiring comprehension
33.	Evaluate	What's the author's main point? What are the arguments for and against this main idea? Rate the arguments (for and against) and justify the rating.	High Level rigor
34.	Fill in Your Thoughts	Written check for understanding strategy where students fill the blanks. (another term for rate of change is ____ or ____.)	Low-level rigor, requires identification and understanding through convergent questioning
35.	Five words	What 5 words would you use to describe ____? Explain and justify your choices	Low-Mid level rigor based on justification
36.	Flag it	Students use this strategy to help them remember information that is important to them. They will "Flag" their ideas on sticky note or flag.	Low-level rigor, requires identification
37.	Function Aerobics	Students demonstrate their knowledge of transformations of functions by physically moving their arms and body	Low-level of rigor requiring identification and understanding

38.	Gallery Walk	After teams have generated ideas on a topic using a piece of chart paper, they appoint a “docent” to stay with their work. Teams rotate around examining other team’s ideas and ask questions of the docent. Teams then meet together to discuss and add to their information so the docent also can learn from other teams.	Low-High level rigor based on the requirements for questioning
39.	Give One, Get One	Cooperative activity where the students write responses to a prompt, meet up with another student and share ideas so that each leaves with something to add to their list.	Low-level rigor requiring students to locate missing information
40.	Graffiti	Groups receive a large piece of paper and felt pens of different colors. Students generate ideas in the form of graffiti. Groups can move to other papers and discuss/add to the ideas.	Low level rigor but can be advanced with high level expectations for graffiti contributions
41.	Human Graph	A kinesthetic activity where students in the class physically move to create a histogram, where each student represents a data point rating their view.	Low-level rigor, can be used for reflection of recalling of statistics
42.	Idea Spinner	The teacher creates a spinner marked into 4 quadrants and labeled “Predict, Explain, Summarize, Evaluate.” After new material is presented, the teacher spins the spinner and asks students to answer a question based on the location of the spinner. For example, if the spinner lands in the “Summarize” quadrant, the teacher might say, “List the key concepts just presented.”	Low-High level rigor based on where the spinner lands
43.	I Have the Question, Who Has the Answer?	The teacher makes two sets of cards. One set contains questions related to the unit of study. The second set contains the answers to the questions. Distribute the answer cards to the students and either you or a student will read the question cards to the class. All students check their answer cards to see if they have the correct answer. A variation is to make cards into a chain activity: The student chosen to begin the chain will read the given card aloud and then wait for the next participant to read the only card that would correctly follow the progression. Play continues until all of the cards are read and the initial student is ready to read his card for the second time.	Low-High level rigor based on the questions on cards
44.	Illustrations	Draw a picture that illustrates a relationship between terms in the text. Explain in one paragraph your visual representation.	Low level rigor
45.	Inside-Outside Circle	Inside and outside circles of students face each other. Within each pair of facing students, students quiz each other with questions they have written. Outside circle moves to create new pairs. Repeat	Low-High level rigor based on the questions composed. Teacher can create the questions to ensure high levels
46.	Interlocking Paper Plates	Two color plates used for students to provide feedback to teacher by sliding the two color section to show level of understanding.	Reflection-based
47.	Interview You	You’re the guest expert on <i>60 Minutes</i> . Answer: 1) What are component parts of ? 2) Why does this topic matter?	Low-High level rigor based on the level of questions
48.	Intrigue journal	List the five most interesting, controversial, or resonant ideas you found in the readings. Include page #s and a short rationale (100 words) for your selection	Low level rigor for intrigue entries, quality rationale will advance the level to mid

49.	Invent a quiz	Write 10 higher order text questions related to the content Exchange and pick 2 to answer	High level of rigor as long as questions are quality high level questions
50.	KWL chart	What do you know, what do you want to know, and what have you learned?	Low level rigor
51.	Letter	Explain _____ in a letter to your best friend. Letters can also be to and from characters, historical figures, scientists etc.	Low-High level rigor based on the expectations of the letter and the role
52.	Mind map	Create a mind map that represents a concept (can use a diagram-making tool, like Gliffy). Provide teacher/ classmates with the link to your mind map.	Low-Mid level rigor based on teacher expectations
53.	Misconception Check	Present students with common or predictable misconceptions about a designated concept, principle, or process. Ask them whether they agree or disagree and explain why. The misconception check can also be presented in the form of a multiple-choice or true-false quiz.	Low-Mid level rigor based on presentation of misconceptions
54.	Muddiest (or Clearest) Point	This is a variation on the one-minute paper, though you may wish to give students a slightly longer time period to answer the question. Here you ask (at the end of a class period, or at a natural break in the presentation), "What was the "muddiest point" in today's lecture?" or, perhaps, you might be more specific, asking, for example: "What (if anything) do you find unclear about the concept of personal identity' ('inertia', 'natural selection', etc.)?".	Reflection-based low level rigor
55.	Muddy moment	What frustrates and confuses you about the text? Why?	Reflection-based low level rigor
56.	Multimedia Poster	Given a topic, students provide all they can in the form of multimedia to present the topic. This can include music, websites, film, artwork, organization links, etc	Low level rigor
57.	Newspaper Headline	Create a newspaper headline that may have been written for the topic we are studying. Capture the main idea of the event.	Low level rigor but can be mid level based on quality synthesis
58.	Numbered Heads Together	Students sit in groups and each group member is given a number. The teacher poses a problem and all four students discuss. The teacher calls a number and that student is responsible for sharing for the group.	Low-High level rigor based on level of questioning
59.	One Question and One Comment	Students are assigned a chapter or passage to read and create one question and one comment generated from the reading. In class, students will meet in either small or whole class groups for discussion. Each student shares at least one comment or question. As the discussion moves student by student around the room, the next person can answer a previous question posed by another student, respond to a comment, or share their own comments and questions. As the activity builds around the room, the conversation becomes in-depth with opportunity for all students to learn new perspectives on the text.	Low-High level rigor based on question requirements

60.	One Sentence Essay	Using chart paper, begin an introductory sentence to an essay regarding the lesson topic. Call each student up individually to add one sentence to the essay	Mid level rigor as students add to the essay it can progressively get more difficult
61.	One Sentence Summary	Students are asked to write a summary sentence that answers the “who, what where, when, why, how” questions about the topic.	Low level rigor with recall
62.	One Word Summary	Select (or invent) one word which best summarizes a topic.	Low level rigor with recall
63.	Onion Ring	Students form an inner and outer circle facing a partner. The teacher asks a question and the students are given time to respond to their partner. Next, the inner circle rotates one person to the left. The teacher asks another question and the cycle repeats itself.	Mid-Level rigor, could be higher based on the questioning however, is difficult for the teacher to assess knowledge of all students
64.	Opinion chart	List opinions about the content in ½ of a t-chart, and support your opinions in the right column	Low-Mid level recall based on right column justifications
65.	Outline	Represent the organization of _____ by outlining it	Low level rigor
66.	66. Pamphlet	Describe the key features of in a visually and textually compelling pamphlet.	Low level rigor
67.	Podcast	Play the part of a content expert and discuss content related issues on a podcast (can use Easypodcast for free).	Low-High level rigor based on podcast requirements
68.	Pop it (Bubble wrap)	Students write what they want to know about a topic on a dot sticker. Place each sticker on a bubble wrap. When a topic is covered, the student pops the bubble.	Low/mid level, can require prediction and inquiry based instruction based on criteria of teacher
69.	Portfolio Check	Check the progress of a student’s portfolio. A portfolio is a purposeful collection of significant work, carefully selected, dated and presented to tell the story of a student’s achievement or growth in well-defined areas of performance, such as reading, writing, math, etc. A portfolio usually includes personal reflections where the student explains why each piece was chosen and what it shows about his/her growing skills and abilities.	Low level rigor if portfolio is just a compilation, can advance rigor with higher requirements, self assessment, and justification
70.	Project Study Group	Analyzing incorrect responses in multiple choice questions.	Low/mid level rigor based on the criteria of teacher
71.	Question stems	Create multiple stems for questioning, students draw one to answer I believe that_____because ____. I’m confused by _____.	Low level rigor but can advance with higher level question stems
72.	72. Quick Writes	A time writing in response to a question or prompt (can be used before, during, or after instructions)	Based on the prompt/questioning, has the potential to be high-level rigor
73.	Reader’s Theater	From an assigned text have students create a script and perform it.	Low-High level rigor based on requirements

74.	RSQC2	In two minutes, students recall and list in rank order the most important ideas from a previous day's class; in two more minutes, they summarize those points in a single sentence, then write one major question they want answered, then identify a thread or theme to connect this material to the course's major goal.	Low level rigor
75.	Rubric	A scoring guide using subjective assessments that is generally composed of dimensions for judging student performing.	Can be high level rigor if students are using it for self assessment and justification is included
76.	Say Something	Students take turns leading discussion in a cooperative group on sections of a reading or recording.	Mid/High-level rigor based on the criteria and leading expectations
77.	Simile	What we learned today is like ----- _____.	Low level rigor
78.	Sketch	Visually represent new knowledge.	Low level rigor
79.	Slap it	Students are divided into two teams to identify correct answers to questions given by the teacher. Student use a flyer swatter the correct response posted on the wall.	Low level rigor based on convergent questioning
80.	So what? Journal	Identify the main idea of the lesson. Why is it important?	Low level rigor, can advance with higher level questioning
81.	Sticky notes annotation	Use sticky notes to describe key passages that are notable or that you have questions about.	Low level rigor but can advance with justification of notable passages
82.	Student Data Notebook	A tool for students to track their learning: where am I going? Where am I now? How will I get there?	Mid/High-Level rigor based on the use of the portfolio and student rationale provided throughout
83.	Study guide	What are the main topics, supporting details, important person's contributions, terms, and definition	Low level rigor
84.	Summary Frames	Description: A _____ is a kind of _____ that Compare/Contrast: _____ and _____ are similar in that they both ... but _____, while _____... Problem/Solution: _____ wanted, but..., so.... Cause/Effect: _____ happens because...	Low-Mid level rigor based on the sentence frame(s) used
85.	Summary Poem Activity	List 10 key words from an assigned text. Do a free verse poem with the words you highlighted Write a summary of the reading based on the words you highlighted	Low-Mid level rigor
86.	Take and Pass	Cooperative group activity used to share or collect information from each member of the group; students write a response, then pass to the right, add their response to next paper, continue until they get their paper back, then group debriefs.	Low-Mid level rigor based on requirements
87.	Tagxedo	What are keywords that express the main ideas? Be ready to discuss and explain.	Low level rigor as written, but teacher can add stretch questions to increase rigor

88.	Talk a Mile a Minute	In partners– giver and receiver... Kind of like “Password” or “Pyramid.” Both know the category, but the receiver has his back to the board/screen. A set of terms will appear based on the category – giver gives clues, while receiver tries to guess the terms. First group done stands up	Low level rigor
89.	Talk show panel	Have a cast of experts debate the finer points of _____	Low-High level rigor based on selected questions
90.	The 411	Describe the author's objective	Low-Mid level rigor based on stretch questioning
91.	The Minute Paper	In 1 minute, describe the most meaningful thing you've learned.	Reflection-based Low level rigor
92.	Three-Minute Pause	The Three-Minute Pause provides a chance for students to stop, reflect on the concepts and ideas that have just been introduced, make connections to prior knowledge or experience, and seek clarification. I changed my attitude about... I became more aware of ... I was surprised about ... I felt ... I related to... I empathized it...	Reflection-based Low level rigor
93.	Think-Pair-Share/ Turn to Your Partner	Teacher gives questions/prompts to students. Students formulate individual response, and then turn to a partner to share their answers. Teacher calls on several random pairs to share their answers with the class.	Low-High level rigor based on questioning
94.	Think- Write- Pair- Share	Students think individually, write their thinking, pair and discuss with partner, then share with the class.	Low-High level rigor based on questioning
95.	Tic-Tac-Toe/ Think-Tac-Toe	A collection of activities from which students can choose to do to demonstrate their understanding. It is presented in the form of a nine square grid similar to a tic-tac-toe board and students may be expected to complete from one to “three in a row”. The activities vary in content, process, and product and can be tailored to address higher learning levels.	Low-High level based on the activities in each square
96.	Timed pair share	Given a prompt, students pair up and share their perspective for a certain amount of time, taking turns (A talks, B listens, then B talks, A listens)	Mid-level rigor based on level of questioning and teacher criteria
97.	Top 10 List	What are the most important takeaways.	Reflection-based Low level rigor
98.	Triangular prism (red, yellow, green)	Students give feedback to teachers by displaying the color that corresponds to their level of understanding	Reflection-based low level rigor
99.	Turn & Talk	Pose a question/concept/topic and have students turn to a partner to answer or discuss	Low level rigor but can advance based on level of question
100.	Twitter Post	Define/explain “post about” topic in under 140 characters.	Low Level rigor
101.	Word sort	Given a set of vocabulary terms, students sort into given categories or create their own categories for sorting	Low level rigor, will check for comprehension

102.	Whip around	Teacher poses a questions and students list three items. All students stand. Teachers randomly calls students to share, if their topic is called they sit. Teacher continues until all students are sitting	Low level rigor, including identification
103.	You've Got Mail	Each student writes a question about a topic on the front of an envelope; the answer is included inside. Questions are then "mailed" around the room. Each learner writes his/her answer on a slip of scratch paper and confirms its correctness by reading the "official answer" before she places his/her own response in the envelope. After several series of mailings and a class discussion about the subject, the envelopes are deposited in the teacher's letterbox.	Low-High Level rigor based on level of questioning