



Study Guide

Brain-Friendly Assessments: What They Are and How to Use Them

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This study guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. This guide is designed to help you reflect on and apply the ideas presented in *Brain-Friendly Assessments*, and is a useful companion piece for individuals, small groups, or an entire faculty. Learning Sciences International thanks you for your interest in this book, and we hope that this guide proves a valuable addition and support to your professional development practices.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. The author states that “assessment is the most dreaded word in public education.” Why is this so?
2. Explain the difference between assessment and testing.
3. Why might teachers of secondary grades have a more negative attitude towards testing than their elementary counterparts?
4. What are the anecdotal reasons given that indicate a widespread increase in standardized testing?
5. List some of the ways that teachers have responded to the strong pressures of testing.

Chapter 2

Why, Who, and What We Assess

1. List and describe the four major components of “student-centered, brain-friendly assessments.”
2. How might you interpret the Rutgers University study, which found that “42 percent [of students] felt that their high school prepared them ‘not very well’ or ‘not well at all’ for their first full-time job”?
3. What are the three stages of memory, and how do they differ?
4. At what point are temporary memories encoded into long-term memory sites?
5. Differentiate between declarative and nondeclarative memory, and explain the components of each.
6. If “the brain is more likely to store information if it makes sense and has meaning,” what then might be a strategy for achieving both?

Chapter 3

Designing and Using Preassessments and Formative Assessments

1. The influence of past learning on new learning is called _____.
2. There are three types of assessment, describe and provide an example of each.

Assessment Type	Description	Example
Preassessment		
Formative Assessment		
Summative Assessment		

3. Explain why formative assessments should not be graded.
4. What are some of the criteria for providing effective student feedback?
5. Why is providing feedback to students beneficial?

Chapter 4

Designing and Using Summative Assessments

1. According to the text, summative assessments differ from formative and preassessments in what specific way?
2. Differentiate between convergent thinking and divergent thinking.
3. List the basic steps of designing a rubric, and discuss the benefits of using one.
4. Describe three qualities of effective summative assessments.
5. The author is critical of the use of grades in assessing student progress. Referring to his arguments and the strategies given for improving grading, do you agree or disagree with his assessment?

Chapter 5

Considering When and Where to Assess

1. What has research on the circadian rhythms of preadolescent and adolescent cognitive function shown?
2. Explain the benefits of later start times for middle and high schools.
3. If the time of day can impact student assessment results, how might the time of year an assessment is administered also affect student results?
4. Define context-dependent memory, and identify the ways in which it could be useful in an assessment setting.

Chapter 6

Putting It All Together

1. In the 2014 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of American attitudes toward public schools, _____ percent of more than one thousand respondents said that the increase in standardized testing was not helpful to teachers.
2. Engagement is “a key predictor of academic success.” What are some of the qualities a school and/or teacher should encourage to increase engagement?
3. In order to maintain motivation, students need to view learning objectives as _____ and offering some degree of _____.
4. How is cooperative learning a “powerful form of brain-friendly formative assessment”?
5. According to the text, “emotion drives attention, and attention drives learning.” What are some strategies you could implement within your own classroom to increase emotional engagement?