

**Formative Assessment:
The One-Minute Paper vs. the Daily Quiz
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Abstract

Regular formative assessment is a vital part of effective teaching and learning. The “one-minute paper” has become a very popular assessment tool among faculty. While many teachers who have used it find tremendous benefits from it, there are also several weaknesses of this tool that are commonly reported by its users. I have tried the “minute-paper” before, and have grappled with its weaknesses. In the past few years, I have switched to the “daily quiz” as my preferred tool for assessing students’ learning, and for helping them learn more effectively. This paper compares the major characteristics of the “minute-paper” versus the “daily quiz”, based on a survey of the literature as well as my own experiences with these tools.

This paper will be of interest to those who employ (or are planning to employ) frequent assessment in their classes. It gives them an analysis of the costs and benefits of two common assessment tools.

While both tools allow useful feedback between teachers and students, the daily quiz provides a better incentive setup. It is able to elicit a more sustained serious response-effort from the students. The quiz also provides a sharper focus in terms of assessing cognitive learning. Indeed, a new study conducted by researchers of memory is finding new insights into the benefits that frequent quizzing brings to the learning process. My own experience with this tool has convinced me that the daily quiz does promote learning. This fact has been confirmed by many students in their evaluation of my courses. The quizzes induce regular attendance, provide an incentive to frequently study or review class material, and make students less likely to cram for the exams. Through the quizzes, students get focused feedback about their learning progress early and frequently, allowing them to adjust their study behaviors promptly. The teacher, too, gets a frequent reading of where individual students are in terms of their understanding of the topics. This allows necessary adjustments and corrections to be made, to promote learning. Repeated experience taking the quizzes reduces the anxiety factor, and increases the students’ feelings of competence and confidence, and this in turn increases their motivation to study and do well. Furthermore, the “effortful retrieval” process that the students are made to go through in the quizzes is found to be a big factor of learning.

In implementing the daily quiz as a formative-assessment tool, however, there are several caveats that the teacher has to be cognizant of. But if designed properly, the daily quiz is indeed a powerful and effective assessment tool.