



Classroom Assessment Techniques: Muddiest Point

Muddiest Point is considered one of the simpler Classroom Assessment Techniques. It requires little preparation on the part of the instructor, yet it yields a wealth of information. It works particularly well in large, lower division courses where a significant amount of new information is presented.

As the name suggests, this technique provides information regarding what students find most confusing about a particular lesson, topic, or concept. The technique consists of asking students to jot a quick response to the question: “What was the muddiest point of _____?” Instructors then use this feedback to discover which ideas are most challenging for students and to guide their teaching decisions in terms of how to allocate time in class.

When considering *Muddiest Point* as a Classroom Assessment Technique, consider the following:

1. Determine your focus. Do you want feedback on an entire lesson, a smaller class segment, a particular concept, or a discussion?
2. Plan to set aside a few minutes at the end of your class period. Be sure to allow enough time that students can respond to your question and you can collect their responses while ensuring that class still ends on time.
3. Give students something to write on, such as a slip of paper or a 3x5 notecard.
4. Offer the question prompt, tell students the amount of time they have to respond, and how you plan to use the information. For example, “I want to get a sense of how everyone is feeling after today’s lesson and determine how much more time we need to spend on this topic.”
5. Finally, collect the responses as students leave class. You might position yourself at the door and consider the written responses a “ticket out” or you could have a location where you ask that responses be placed before students leave.



Once you have collected students' responses, quickly read through at least half, looking for commonalities. The data analysis should be kept very simple. You can also look through all responses and sort them in order to gain a "snapshot" of what students are finding difficult. This way you can adjust instruction in response to students' needs. Most importantly, be sure to respond to students' feedback during the next class meeting or through the online classroom.

The idea of *Muddiest Point* can be adapted, too. You can begin class by asking students to identify the muddiest points of a reading or homework assignment as a mechanism for accountability or as a way to launch the lesson. You can also use *Muddiest Point* as an active lecture break by asking students to identify what they believe to be the most confusing aspect of the previous lecture segment, or to discuss the content with which they are still struggling.