**Initial Assessment - Establishing your learners’ starting points**

Initial assessment is a crucial part of the learning journey. It provides the information needed to decide a learner’s starting point. It is the benchmark from which learners’ progress and achievement can be measured.

“Initial assessment needs to be done with learners rather than to them. It should be of benefit to learners and help them feel positive about themselves and their potential to learn.” 1

Why is Initial Assessment important?

**For the Learner**

* establishes the starting point so that the learner can see how much he/she achieves during the course
* fosters a more reflective approach to learning

**For the Tutor**

* enables the tutor to effectively plan to meet individual learners’ needs
* establishes a starting point in order to review learners’ progress and achievements
* improves quality of teaching

**How do you carry out Initial Assessment?**

Initial assessment may start during enrolment to establish learners’ interests, experience and motivation or it may be part of a “getting to know you” activity in induction. It needs to be flexible and should reflect the nature of the group. It should be adapted to suit the needs, both of the individuals within the group and of the group itself.

Using a range of assessment methods will enable you to capture a learner’s starting point

* tutor observations
* self assessment exercises
* group discussion
* one-to-one with tutor
* games and practical activities
* quiz and questionnaires

Whichever method(s) you choose, it is important that initial assessment contains some form of skill/knowledge assessment which can be validated by the tutor. Use these examples as a starting point and adapt them to meet the needs of your learners.

**How do you record initial assessment?**

When assessment takes place it is important to record it. The record of assessment could be as simple as a dated tick sheet or could be a written report after a tutorial. Choose a way of recording assessment that suits both you and your learners. For the majority of adult learners it is appropriate to assess as informally as possible and to limit the amount of form filling/paperwork. An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) provides a record of the 5 stages of [RARPA](https://www.hampshirefutures.co.uk/course/view.php?id=597#section-2) and enables the learner to reflect on their own learning and achievements.

**Finally**

Before you choose or devise an assessment method think

* is it appropriate for the needs of the learner?
* is it appropriate for the dynamics of the group?
* are you, as a tutor, comfortable with this method?
* can it be easily recorded?