

How to use Mike's Thinking Cubes from LDA



Thinking Cubes are a quick, fun and effective way to combine thinking skills, assessment for learning and active learning. The green cube is for reflecting, the red one for expressing, and the blue one for connecting to next learning steps. Here are the instructions included in each pack. **Share ideas at www.thinkingclassroom.co.uk**

Summary

Thinking Cubes provide you and your children with an entertaining and effective way to think about learning and to make it more engaging. This in turn can lead to higher levels of achievement in many curriculum areas and to improvements in learning and thinking skills. Each of the three cubes targets a different part of the learning process. They can be used individually or in combination.

- The What Cube (Green) is concerned with reflecting on the knowledge and skills learned
- The How Cube (Red) looks at how children can show others what they have learned
- The What Next Cube (Blue) helps children to connect their varied learning experiences together

You can roll just one cube if you want to focus on only one aspect of learning. For example, throw the **What Cube** to evaluate a lesson and its subject content. Or throw the **How Cube** to encourage alternative ways to demonstrate learning.

You can roll two or three cubes and expand the quantity and breadth of stimuli. One cube gives 6 possibilities; 3 cubes provide $6 \times 6 \times 6 = 216$! Children will find the chance nature of the cubes exciting and engaging ("what's it going to be this time?!") and the many possible combinations will keep activities varied and interesting. However, of the 216 combinations, some may not lend themselves to a particular lesson or subject. In this case, simply throw again.

Three ways to use the cubes:

1. At the end of a lesson (or as a mini-review during it), chose 3 children to throw the cubes. They might get:

- What didn't you understand? (Green Cube)
- Discuss it with a group (Red Cube)
- Think of 2 questions (Blue Cube)

Short group discussions take place in which each person puts forward something (if anything) that they didn't 'get' during the lesson. Then follows a group decision on 2 questions that need to be answered to help further understanding.

2. The cubes can be thrown at the start of a lesson but the activity created not used until the end. A delay may also take place between lessons – throw at the end of one lesson then carry out at the beginning of the next.

3. At the end of a lesson (or part of a lesson) throw the **What Cube** to a child who must catch it then answer the question facing him. He then throws it to a fellow pupil who catches it and does the same. This could happen across tables, across the classroom or with everyone arranged in a circle.

Thinking Cubes and Thinking Skills

The prompts on each face of the cubes have been chosen to activate lower and higher order thinking skills. If you use the cubes regularly over several weeks, the varied combinations will give your children opportunities to think at all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and also to think about their thinking and learning (metacognition).

For example, "How will you use what you have learned" requires *application* (one of Bloom's Levels) and "Which part of the lesson was best" calls on *evaluation*.

Thinking Cubes and Assessment for Learning

The oft quoted definitive work, "Inside the Black Box" by Black and Wiliam (2001) describes assessment for learning very clearly: It's when both teacher and pupil know:

1. Where the pupil is
2. Where she wants to be, and
3. How she's going to get there

Thinking Cubes can assist in embedding this process into the thinking classroom culture. The **What Cube** and the **How Cube** together provide opportunities for pupils to show where they are in their learning. The What Next Cube opens up thinking about where they may want to go next in their learning. The **How Cube** alone can be applied again but this time suggesting starting points for closing the gap between 1 and 2.

I'm sure you'll adapt, invent and innovate with these cubes. If you develop anything you'd like to share with other educators, please tell them at the Thinking Classroom forums:

<http://www.thinkingclassroom.co.uk/ShowForums.aspx>

Happy rolling!

Mike Fleetham

Thinking Cubes can be purchased directly from LDA Learning:

http://www.ldalearning.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Product_95_10451_-1_197020

or from the Thinking Classroom Shop