Developing the Pretest

Adapt the following guidelines to create a pretest. Keep in mind that a pretest should reflect the learners’ strengths as it identifies their needs. It takes time to strategically develop a pretest, however; it is a valuable tool when the findings guide differentiated instruction.

Administer the pre-assessment two weeks before teaching the new topic or unit.

1. Design the test items so no one can achieve a score of 100 percent. Be sure the items challenge every student taking the test.
2. Design the items so no one receives a score of 0 percent.
3. Plan the test to cover the full range of learning, from the simple to the complex.
4. Present items that range from hands-on to abstract.
5. Disperse easy and difficult questions or tasks throughout the assessment. This deters students from assuming that the easiest portion of the assessment is at the beginning. Often students stop trying when they come to a difficult question because they assume the remaining tasks will be even more difficult.
6. Include manipulatives in the pre-assessment if they are used in the related lessons.
7. Use the same pre- and posttest to analyze growth.

Vary the formats of the pretest. For example, use open-ended questions, graphic organizers, matching, multiple choice, and fill in the blank. Design the items to challenge learners with different levels of questions and thinking.

From *Differentiated Assessment Strategies* (pp 81 – 82) by C. Chapman & R. King, 2005 Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press