

Tech Snacks: Backward Design

Use this activity worksheet during our Tech Snacks discussion.

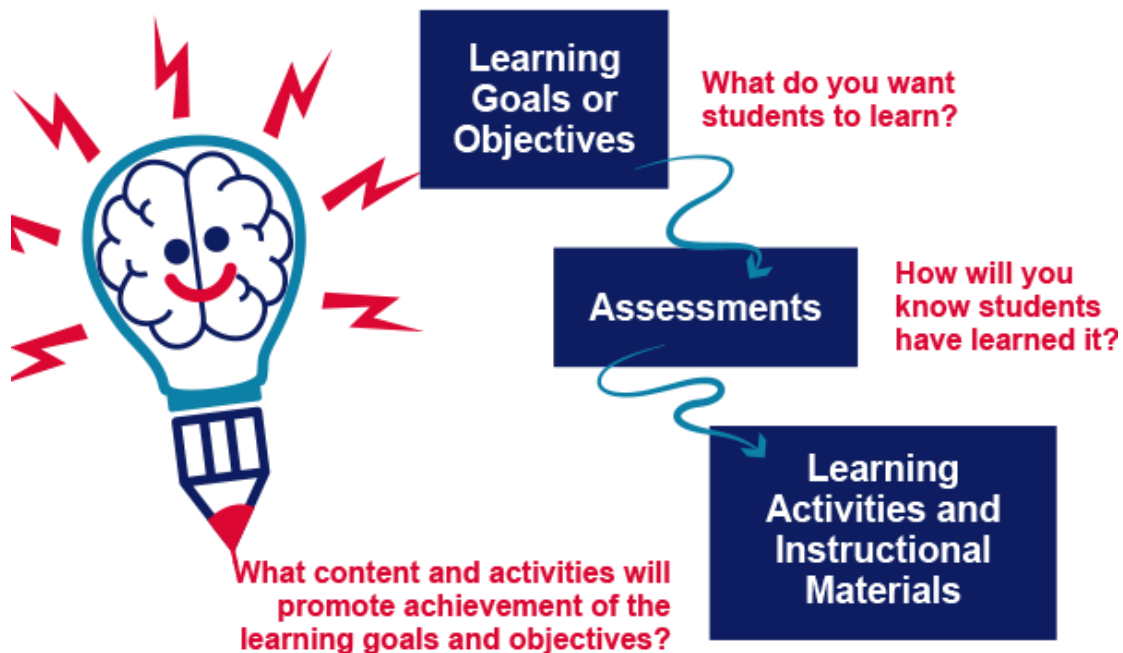
What is Backward Design?

Backward Design is a planning framework for course design. There are 3 stages.

Stage 1: The teacher starts by stating what students should know, understand, or be able to do by the end of the course.

Stage 2: The teacher describes what is acceptable *evidence* that a person (their student) possesses the desired knowledge or skills.

Stage 3: The teacher organizes the course's curriculum around student activities that will generate acceptable evidence (creating opportunities for formative feedback) and instructional materials that will support students in acquiring the relevant knowledge and skills needed to perform those activities.



BackwardDesignFramework-V5, UIC Center for the Advancement of Teaching Excellence, Retrieved from <https://teaching.uic.edu/cate-teaching-guides/syllabus-course-design/backward-design/>, CC BY-NC 4.0

Let's Try It!

Stage 1: Identify Desired Results (Learning Objectives)

Activity/Discussion Prompt: Create a one-sentence mission statement for one of your courses.

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Stage 2: Determine Acceptable Evidence (Assessment)

Activity/Discussion Prompt: Domain experts can typically distinguish people who are competent in a domain from people who are just confident or compliant. Think about your course's mission statement from Stage 1. What would count as acceptable evidence that a student has developed the knowledge and skills sufficient to accomplish/fulfill the course's mission? (Careful: a student's ability to follow instructions doesn't necessarily mean they've demonstrated actual competence.)

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Next, what assessments would generate that evidence? Note that by "assessment," we mean *anything* that gives us evidence about how students are progressing toward the course's objective. It includes low-stakes formative assessments, which help you and learners know if they are on-track or if course correction is needed. It also includes summative assessments, which are graded evaluations of student performance that are often placed at the end of instruction.

Formative Assessments		Summative Assessments

Stage 3: Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

Activity/Discussion Prompt: Given your course's mission statement, what you've identified as acceptable evidence of competence, and the assessments you'll use to gather that evidence, what then follows for the supporting activities and instructional materials?

A few things you might consider:

- Would this approach have implications for how you pick out books or other learning resources, e.g., videos, articles, etc.?
- Where are the opportunities for feedback, and how should students use it?
- How might designing backward from performance outcomes impact how students should prepare for assessments?
- How would you make it engaging?

A Few Resources Worth Your Time

- [Chapter 1. What Is Backward Design?](#) From the book *Understanding by Design*, by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe
- [Understanding by Design](#), YouTube video (10:51 minutes) from Grant Wiggins, co-creator of Backward Design
- [Backward Design](#), from the University of Illinois, Chicago