

# Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down

Learn how this strategy relates to the Formative Assessment Process.

[Formative Assessment Process Flier](#)



[Understanding the Formative Assessment Process](#)



## Overview

### Description

Hand signals can be used to rate or indicate students' understanding of content. This strategy requires engagement by all students and allows the teacher to quickly check for understanding within a large group.

### Student Benefits

- self-reflect on understanding of the material.
- relay to the teacher where they feel their understanding is without "traditional assessment."

### Suggested Materials

- Colored cards (e.g., green, yellow, red)



## Step-by-Step

1. Select a question based on the learning goal and/or success criteria.
2. Ask students the question, give appropriate think time, and ask them to show thumbs up for clear understanding, thumbs to the side for “so-so” understanding, or thumbs down if they are confused or uncertain. Teachers may elect to have students hold their thumbs close to their chest so others cannot see their response.
3. Interpret the room and decide next steps based on student responses.



## Things To Consider

- If this strategy is a self-reflection process intended to relay understanding between the student and teacher, then teachers should ask students to hold up their own score “close to chest,” so only the teacher can see what they are holding up.
- If this strategy is intended to be used during partner or small-group discussions (thumbs up if you agree, thumbs down if you disagree), then students hold their thumbs high in the sky, so all students can see the results.
- Posting an Anchor Chart of what the directions (up, down, sideways) mean can be helpful for younger students.
- Alternatively, you can use colored cards (e.g., green, yellow, red).

## Strategy In Action

### Clarify

When planning what questions you will ask when using thumbs up/thumbs down, be sure the questions align to your success criteria and have an idea of where you would like your students to be (e.g., all 4s and 5s).

### Elicit

This activity elicits information from students regarding their level of comfort or knowledge of a topic.

### Interpret

The teacher interprets how well students understand the learning goal and/or success criteria by interpreting their hand signals.

## Act

Based on the number of thumbs up or down (or to the side), the teacher decides how to act, such as providing more examples, re-teaching, or providing an enrichment activity.