

Guided Instruction

Simply telling students how to do something or lecturing about knowledge we expect them to acquire is rarely enough to foster lasting learning. Guided instruction provides a solution, incorporating sufficient opportunities for practice of *everything* we expect students to know or be able to do as the result of our teaching. Guided instruction typically occurs in three phases, differentiated by whether we intend to teach a skill or convey knowledge.

- **Demonstrate: “I Do” or “I Say” / “Talk Through”**
 - **Skill:** direct instruction using demonstration and explanation of the skill students must acquire. We lead students through the skill by modeling how to do what we expect them to do.
 - **Knowledge:** instructor presentation of informational content via lecture, multimedia presentation, whole-group discussion, etc.

- **Facilitate: “We Do” / “Walk Through”**
 - **Skill:** guided activity, often in a group setting, involving active learning and supported student practice of the skill. We guide students as they practice the skill in class under our direct supervision.
 - **Knowledge:** student exploration of informational content presented by the instructor through small-group discussion, problem solving, small group investigations, role-playing, jigsaw, or other strategies for active learning.

- **Evaluate: “You Do” / “Drive Through”**
 - **Skill:** students practice the skill independently outside of class, demonstrating their increasing proficiency in or development of the desired skill.
 - **Knowledge:** students expand upon or apply their learning through additional reading, writing, research, or other assignments, demonstrating their acquisition of knowledge.

This pedagogical approach is nothing new. It’s how we naturally teach others how to do something. We show them how to do it, we help them do it, and then we let them try it on their own. Driver’s education, for example, generally involves classroom instruction (“I Do” and “I Say”) followed by many hours of supervised driving (“We Do”) during which the instructor gradually reduces their verbal coaching until the student is capable of controlling the vehicle independently (“You Do”).

Higher education has an unfortunate tendency to skip from demonstration to evaluation, skipping over the important step of facilitating students’ learning through supervised practice or exploration. Guided instruction deepens students’ learning and increases their likelihood of success on independent tasks or assignments.