

GEMS ESSENTIALS



Busting Common Misconceptions

This document should be read alongside the Teach Like a GEM Playbook to ensure full alignment with the techniques.

The GEMS Essentials comprise six carefully selected techniques that break down high-impact instructional practices designed to help students know, understand, and retain information. Common misconceptions can sometimes get in the way of using these techniques effectively. Let's set the record straight and ensure every GEMS teacher is equipped to apply them with clarity and confidence, maximising their impact on student learning.

DO NOW (RETRIEVAL PRACTICE)

Misconception	Clarification
Do Now is the same as a lesson starter	Do Now is a short task focused on effortful retrieval practice, while a Lesson Starter introduces the lesson or new content.
Do Now must always involve free recall	A mix of free and cued recall yields the best results, with cued recall being more effective for younger learners. Recall should be from memory, with assisted recall used only as needed.
Do Now must directly link to the lesson	Do Now tasks can draw on prior lessons, earlier units, or other subjects (interleaving) to strengthen retention and prime for new learning.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Misconception	Clarification
Learning Outcomes should be written for different levels	Each lesson should have a single Learning Outcome, with scaffolding adjusted throughout to support all students in successfully achieving it.
Learning Outcomes list activities	Activities are the means through which students achieve the outcome; the learning outcome itself should focus on the procedural knowledge or skill to be gained.
Learning Outcomes are broad statements	Learning outcomes should be precise and focused, clearly stating the skill students will develop in a single lesson to ensure it is both achievable and assessable.

TO KNOW

Misconception	Clarification
Knowledge components list facts for students to memorise	Knowledge components include both factual information and conceptual understanding that connect to broader knowledge frameworks.
It is enough to introduce knowledge components once	Knowledge components should be revisited and reinforced across multiple lessons and units, supporting schema development and deep integration into long-term memory.
To Know statements start with a verb	Knowledge components should be written as knowledge statements that emphasise substantive knowledge (know what) rather than procedural knowledge (know how to).

I DO, WE DO, YOU DO

Misconception	Clarification
I Do, We Do, You Do must always occur within a single lesson	While commonly used in one lesson, the model can span multiple lessons, especially for complex concepts, allowing for extended practice, feedback, and mastery over time.
It is better to merge the I Do with the You Do to reduce teacher talk	The I Do and We Do phases should be clearly separated to ensure explicit instruction is followed by scaffolded practice.
I Do, We Do, You Do is rigid and must follow a strict sequence	I Do, We Do, You Do typically follows a clear sequence, the structure can be adapted, looping back, extending a phase, or beginning with We Do if students have secure prior knowledge.

AFFIRMATIVE CHECKING

Misconception	Clarification
Affirmative Checking is an assessment task	Affirmative checking is an ongoing instructional technique where the teacher circulates the room, provides real-time actionable feedback, and addresses misconceptions immediately.
Affirmative Checking requires the teacher to correct students' work	Affirmative checking focuses on guiding improvement, reinforcing understanding, and fostering self-correction, rather than simply identifying errors and proving correct answers.
Affirmative Checking is done at the end of a lesson	Affirmative checking takes place multiple times throughout the lesson and should be seamlessly integrated with other techniques like as Do Now, 'We Do', and 'You Do'.

EXIT TICKETS

Misconception	Clarification
All students should complete the same exit ticket	Exit tickets can vary based on student needs, allowing for different questions or prompts for various levels of understanding.
Exit tickets are always written	While written responses are common, exit tickets can take many forms, including verbal responses, drawings, or quick demonstrations.
Exit tickets focus on content recall	Exit tickets can also focus on applying concepts, analysing information, or making connections, offering deeper insight into student understanding.