



## Learner Feedback On-the-Go: Formative Level 1 Evaluation

### **Blank stares? Smiles? Droopy eyelids?** How is *your* class going?

In this article we'll explore methods to better evaluate learner reaction throughout a class (formative evaluation), rather than relying solely on physical symptoms (which may not be sending the intended message) or waiting until the end to have learners complete a (summative) course evaluation.

Why collect formative data during a class?

According to Wendy Kayser Kirkpatrick, "So much is invested in reaction sheets that are only summative in nature. While this is good and important data, it's too bad that so many professionals overlook opportunities to gather data during the course. The benefits of doing this are:

- Something may be able to be done to correct problems.
- It may open the door to conversations with more in-depth information than a [course evaluation] reaction sheet typically provides.
- It doesn't add any time or cost to measure during the course itself."

Here are just a few ways to collect formative feedback.

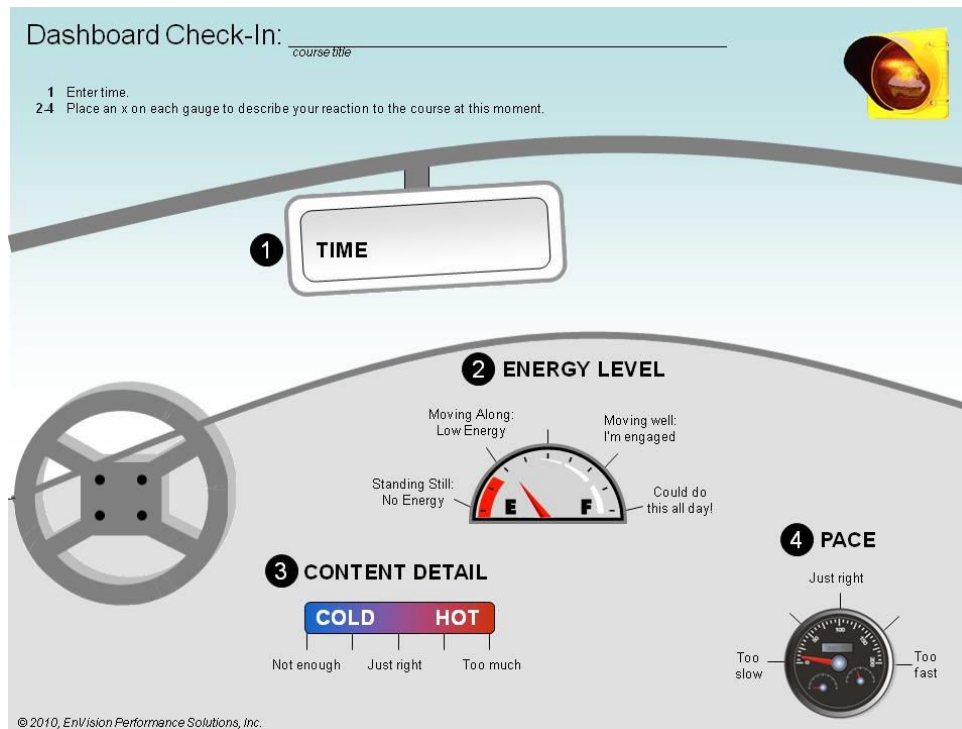
### **1 – Show of hands**

Check in for quick, immediate feedback by asking a question requiring a show of hands. For example, "Who already knows how to ...?" or "Who has performed this task on the job before coming to class?" This will help you evaluate the participants' knowledge level and adjust accordingly.

### **2 – Dashboard**

On a check-in sheet that looks like the dashboard of a car, learners rate items such as pace (speedometer), amount of content detail (temperature gauge), and energy level (fuel gauge or even the view out the window).

Provide learners with a pile of dashboards and, at specified moments throughout the course, ask them to indicate their personal measures for each dashboard item at that time. This provides specific data regarding a point in time and can be used to fine-tune the course. You can review the dashboards during activities or breaks for immediate feedback. Contact us for a sample dashboard check-in tool you can use.



### 3 – Flipchart check-in

As learners begin a scheduled break, ask them to indicate their reaction to the course so far on a prepared flipchart. Be sure to determine what is most important for you to know and write those one or two questions on top of the flipchart. For example, write "*This course is...*" and draw a line with descriptive anchors at each end (too slow/too fast or not engaging/very engaging). Learners place an x based on their reaction to the course so far. Or, prepare an open-ended question such as, "*What I like most about this course so far is...*" You can provide Post It® notes to avoid crowding at the chart.

### 4 – Plus/delta

Just before lunch break or at the end of the day for a multiple-day course, facilitate a brief "plus/delta" session:

- At the top of one flipchart write a plus sign (+) or the question "*What is going well?*" Ask participants, "What do you like about how the training is going so far?" and "What should we keep doing?"
- At the top of a second flipchart write a delta sign ( $\Delta$ ) or the question "*What would you like to see done differently?*"
- For each set of questions, elicit responses about content, level of detail, pace, and engagement and chart the responses.

Try implementing one or more of these mid-course evaluation techniques the next time you are training. Adjust the course to your audience in each class to maximize learning for the class as a whole. Keep in mind these techniques augment, and don't replace, regular check-ins you do throughout a class such as "visiting" groups during activities or asking what questions learners have as you cover each topic.