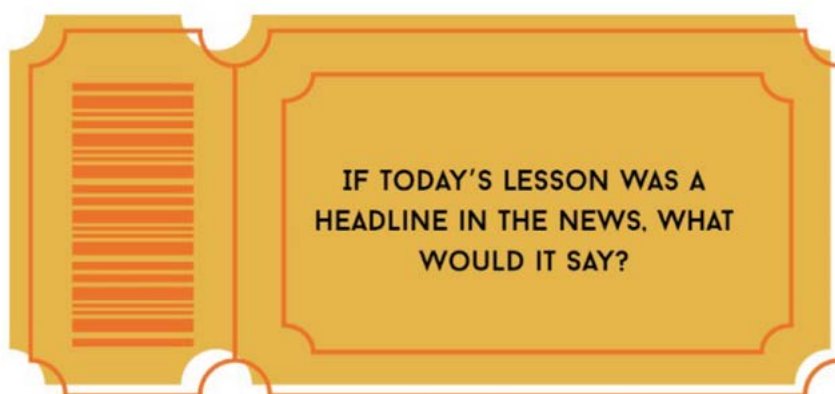




# Last-minute learning

**Diana Bauducco**

describes how to use exit tickets.



Receiving an entrance ticket for an event fills you with expectation, with mystery, with the desire to know what is going to happen. Well, how would you feel if you were given an exit ticket, necessary to leave that event or a class? You might feel that you finished something, that you managed to complete it and almost surely this would fill you

with satisfaction, a feeling of being valued and maybe even a wish to come back. Well, let's apply this to the classroom.

The use of **exit tickets** in education is a simple and brief activity that can be used as formative or summative assessment, or as student self-assessment. Before leaving (for recess, lunch, the end of the day, or simply the end of class) students complete

a 'ticket', which can be a question, the solution to a problem or an answer to 'What have you learnt today?'.

There are many different forms of exit tickets and many ways to deliver them; the benefits are also many.

- **Immediate and adaptive feedback:** the teacher gets almost immediate feedback from the class, which makes it possible not only to address possible problems but also to plan accordingly for the next lesson.
- **Evaluation without pressure:** students can show honestly what they know and what they don't, with no risk. This reduces anxiety and helps them feel supported.
- **Promoting metacognition:** they help students reflect on their own learning and difficulties, which helps them become independent learners.

## How to design exit tickets

It sounds perfect so far, but the effectiveness of an exit ticket in any class, whether English or history, depends on its design. The first thing is to be clear about what the teacher wants to know with the exit ticket: usually this is related to the lesson objective and is a way to measure if students have reached that objective. However, we can also aim at metacognition and teaching practice, and so design exit tickets that help students reflect on their learning and help teachers reflect on their classes, activities and delivery methods.

The second aspect to consider is the format. An exit ticket must be brief, simple and clear. It should only need a few minutes to complete, which usually means one or two easy questions. The format can be a small sheet, a card, a Post-it note, or a digital form (Google Forms, Poll Everywhere). This also makes collecting and reviewing responses simple. Using a variety of formats keeps the process interesting and attractive for students.

Anonymous? Yes, exit tickets can be anonymous if the teacher wants a general response from the class as a whole. Again, the key is variety and alignment with the objectives of the exit ticket and the lesson.

Another important point is the teacher's response to the feedback provided in the exit tickets. Some misconceptions or errors can be reviewed right there and then. We must remember that this activity happens at the end of class, when students just want to leave. Other knowledge gaps or misconceptions can be revisited in later lessons. The important thing is that students feel and see that the information they provided is heard and taken into account for their learning.

This brings us to another consideration: an atmosphere of trust. For honest answers, students need to know they won't be penalised for mistakes and that the activity isn't graded for high stakes. This reassurance lowers anxiety and encourages authentic reflection.

Finally – and maybe most related to language teaching – is the type and level of language we use. The first thing is to consider the students' level of competence.

Teachers should adapt vocabulary and grammar to students' proficiency, using short sentences and familiar structures so they can focus on ideas rather than decoding the wording. Clear, concise instructions work best – for example, 'Write one new word you learnt today' – instead of long or complex directions. Avoid idioms or abbreviations unless they are part of the lesson objective.

Keeping students motivated requires showing clearly that their answers influence teaching, which demands consistency and planning.

For Young Learners or lower-level groups, **visual supports** are key for comprehension and motivation – but visuals should aid understanding, not serve as mere decoration.

## Types of questions and tasks

### Reflection questions

These help students think about their learning, express curiosity or confusion, and promote self-awareness. In an English class, they help students

reflect on areas where they need more practice, for example:

- What is your main takeaway from today's class?
- What new vocabulary did you learn today?
- Which sentence structure was most challenging or difficult?

### Comprehension questions

These can be used in higher-level or skills classes to check understanding of texts, grammar points or key concepts. for example:

- Summarise the text in your own words.
- Explain the meaning of this idiom.

### Self-assessment and participation questions

These help students think about their language skills and also their behaviour and effort during class, promoting accountability and proactive learning habits, for example:

- Did you participate in class today? Rate your participation from 1–5.
- What strategy did you use to help you learn better or pay more attention?

### Emotional and social check-ins

These help us monitor student motivation and the socio-emotional climate of the class, supporting overall wellbeing, for example:

- How do you feel about using English in class?
- What's your mood at the end of the day? (use emojis)
- What part of the class made you feel excited or frustrated?



### Connecting the lesson to the world

Whatever subject we teach, one goal is that what students learn can be used in real life. These tasks help maintain and strengthen that connection, for example:

- Write one sentence you could use in a daily conversation.
- Where and when would you use [insert idiom]?

### Creative and application tasks

These engage students in creative language use, reaching different learning styles and showing personal application of what they learnt, for example:

- Design a T-shirt with a slogan using the words you learnt today.
- Compose a short poem using today's vocabulary.
- Draw a comic strip illustrating today's dialogue.

### Short quizzes or problems

Finally, quick tasks (like Kahoot! or slide quizzes) help teachers identify areas that still need practice while students enjoy a short challenge, for example:

- fill in the blanks; verb tense exercises; match vocabulary with definitions.

### Challenges for students and teachers

Not everything is perfect with exit tickets. Both students and teachers can face difficulties that sometimes lead to abandoning the practice. Many students may feel unsure about what to write or how to complete them, especially if they are not used to reflecting quickly, or at all, on what they have learnt. In

English classes, language can be an extra obstacle: some fear making grammar mistakes or simply cannot find the right words to answer. Again, the design and appropriate use of language play a key role. Time pressure at the end of class can add stress, so planning a few dedicated minutes is essential. Other students might see the exit ticket as a 'mini-test' and feel anxious, which lowers the quality of their answers. Finally, if they don't see the teacher using their comments and responses, they may think it is a meaningless task and answer superficially.

For teachers, one challenge is collecting and reviewing all the tickets quickly, especially in large groups, in order to turn that information into concrete actions that students notice.

Another difficulty is writing questions that fit both the level and the goal of each lesson: too easy gives little information, too hard discourages. Keeping students motivated requires showing clearly that their answers influence teaching, which demands consistency and planning. Maybe the biggest challenge is simply believing in the activity's value. If the teacher is convinced of the usefulness of exit tickets, they will transmit that enthusiasm to the class, plan accordingly and use the information effectively.

### Summing up

Exit tickets are a simple yet powerful tool that can transform the way students reflect on their learning and how teachers plan their lessons. When designed thoughtfully, they can provide immediate feedback, promote metacognition and create a

supportive classroom environment. While challenges exist for both students and teachers, the benefits far outweigh the difficulties. Used consistently and with purpose, exit tickets not only help students feel valued and accomplished but also give teachers the insight they need to make learning more effective, engaging and meaningful. Plus, they turn those last five minutes of class into a fun, meaningful wrap-up that keeps students thinking and involved.

### Useful resources

Boston College Center for Teaching Excellence. (2024). 'Exit tickets'. *Teaching Strategies*. Available from <https://cteresources.bc.edu/documentation/exit-tickets/> (Last accessed 5 October 2025).

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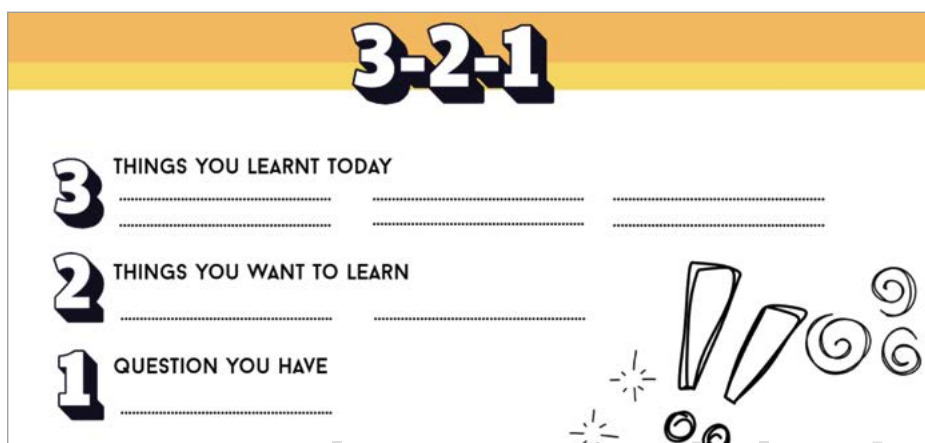
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International House London as Academic Manager for the YL division. Diana advocates for innovative educational practices and continuously seeks methodologies that enhance teaching and learning in the EFL classroom, with a focus on creating engaging and dynamic learning environments.