# Frequently asked questions:

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## Differentiation:

**In all my lessons, all my time is taken up prompting and working through each (middle of the way) student’s individual misconceptions. I CAN’T get to the higher students, or give the lower students the one-on-one guidance they need, because the middle students have many misconceptions that need addressing. I’m really frustrated with this because they ALL need my help to support and extend their learning. How can I help all 3 levels at once, because they ALL need guidance or extension at the same time?**

**I’ve read your very helpful tips, but I can’t work out how to meet ALL these important needs at once. Thank you for your help.**

This is a pretty common problem at the start of the year as students are having their misconceptions addressed for the first time. Usually this improves significantly in second term, with teachers feeling pretty comfortable by third term. In the meantime though, here are a few things to try. I can give you more once I know what grade you are teaching.

1. Reduce the amount that you are expecting to get through. Spend two lessons on a journal problem, and only aim for 5-6 in term 1. For one lesson work with half the kids while the other half work on practice/repetition. For the second lesson swap over. Even though this seems to take a lot of time the change in students’ misconceptions means that in the long term the learning sticks MUCH better and learning takes far less time in term 3 and 4. Most of the major misconceptions to deal with are also in place value and fractions which is usually most of term 1. Once those are sorted then teaching becomes much easier.
2. Form groups and get the kids to help each other. Accept that you will only be able to do one-on-one teaching with about 4-5 kids per lesson. Encourage the others to work together, but just don’t mark their work unless you observe them. I suggest groups of 3 as more than that means that the kids muck up.
3. Have you set up a challenge table? It is a spare table with 4 or 5 chairs that you can use for different situations. In terms of differentiation, I suggest that you put your extension students there and give them the “manipulation” or “backwards” problems as soon as they have solved the initial question. It also means that it is easier to get to them because they are all sitting together. I suggest that you also ability group your really low students, and remember to alter the problem down straight away so that they are working at an appropriate level. You may need to do this for more students if it is just too difficult. The initial problem should get around 80% of kids stuck. If more than 80% are stuck, then you should adjust the problem down for everyone to start with.
4. Photocopy the leading questions from the teaching guide, and blue tack them onto cards. Stick the cards onto the board, labelled with a number. Let groups of kids come and get a prompt if they need it, but they need to write the prompt number on their page. Also, let groups all work off the same piece of paper. Give different coloured pens to each of the students in the group. Have them write their names on the paper and that way you can associate a colour with a particular child and see which bit they did.
5. Try writing the base problem on the board, then writing a lower level below it and a higher level problem above it. Let kids pick their own problem to start on, then try the higher level one.
6. The blast activities are much easier and should involve a lot less prompting. Consider having all the kids working on those except for your really low kids so that you have time to work with them in a small group. You can also use lower level blast activities with all the kids except for your extension kids.
7. In a week, I tend to aim for one journal lesson, two blast lessons and two skill/drill lessons. I mix these up a bit so that I can work directly with specific kids in each lesson.
8. Have you had a look through my small schools program? It cuts down the requirements to the bare basics so that you have more time to get stuff done. Even though you are at a huge school it is probably worth adapting it as a work program. C2C is really difficult to work with as it is so pushed for time and skips between concepts too quickly. Our program slows everything down to help you get the most out of your kids.

I hope that these help. It can be very difficult dealing with lots of levels at the same time. The key is to remember that you can’t do everything, but need to target the things that will make the most difference. In any one lesson there are too many misconceptions to be able to fix them all, but the ones that you can fix will make a life-long difference. Aim to get to the others in the next few days and allow yourself flexible time to be able to do that (plan for at least one lesson completely free per week to catch up on what you missed).

## How do we subscribe for Back to Front Maths as a school?

Thanks for your question. Web access can be set up for an individual teacher ($249.95 for 12 months) or for a whole school ($6.95 per student for 12 months). We can set up your web access directly once we have a few questions answered.

Please answer the following questions and we will set it up then send you through an invoice and the login details:

1. Is this subscription for an individual or for your whole school?
2. Who is the best contact person?
3. What is their email address?
4. What is your school name?
5. What state are you in?
6. For school subscribers: How many students are in your school between reception and year 7?
7. Would you like a copy of our small schools work program (designed for teaching multi-age classes) for an extra $150 to use in combination with the web resources?

Once we have your answers through your access can be set up within 48 hours and your invoice will be emailed through in the next week.

## Are there answers to the NAPLAN preparation packs?

Yes there are answers available, however the process of exploring the questions with your class is more important than the answers. Would you mind please answering the following questions? Once we hear back we will send them through the appropriate answers to you.

1. Which preparation pack are you seeking answers to?
2. Which grade are you currently teaching?
3. Where are you currently teaching?
4. How did you find out about the NAPLAN preparation packs?

## Multi-level units

**We are teaching grade 3/4 this year and I am trying to locate you multi-level units. Where would I find them on the website?**

Are you after the C2C units or our small schools work program?    
  
We have done C2C units for single grades but not for the multi-grade units.  You will need to select from the activities for those to match up.  
  
A much better approach would be to use our small schools program instead of C2C, which was written specifically for multi-age classes.  It makes use of differentiation and some fairly clever program writing to make sure that you cover all of the AC while catering for multiple grades all at the same time and still have some flexible lessons each week.  The program can be purchased for $150 (once off), and the resources are already put into simple files to download for each couple of weeks with lesson plans and activities.  
  
Let me know what you would prefer to do.

## Are the grades in B2F the same as the Australian Curriculum?

**Does Grade One equate to the first formal year of schooling? I live in SA and our first year of formal schooling is Reception (or Prep). I need to know in relation to the moderating tasks. Thanks**

All of our resources are aligned with the Australian Curriculum.  We have Foundation (Prep) material on the website, but no printed Foundation books at this time.  Anything marked as "Grade 1" or "Year 1" refers to the year after prep.  I hope that helps.  Please feel free to ask anything else you need.

## Can’t find the resources online

**I purchased an individual teacher subscription but I am unable to find on your site where I can download the online resources for the teacher books and also the other resources will not open for me, please can you assist me**

Thanks for contacting us. I am not certain that I have understood your question, so please let me know if the following does not provide the correct answer.  
  
In response to requests from subscribers, we have reformatted the online version so that the teacher and student material for each year level and content type are clustered together into a single PDF download.

1. You can access the material by logging in at[www.backtofrontmaths.com.au/teachers](http://www.backtofrontmaths.com.au/teachers) and then selecting Lessons Bank in the header bar. (<http://www.backtofrontmaths.com.au/teachers/lessons-bank>)
2. From there, you can choose to search by Content Area or Year Level.  Let's choose Content Area for this example.  (<http://www.backtofrontmaths.com.au/teachers/lessons-bank/search-by-content-area>)
3. The Content areas are listed as hyperlinks, with corresponding letters.  Clicking on one takes you to the relevant section and from there you can choose the Year level required.
4. For example, we can click on Content Area **F: Time**, then the word **Download** under Year 2 to download document 2F.
5. That opens a grey dialogue box with "Lesson Plan 2F" and the word Download, which is the link to the PDF, which should be able to be read with any reasonably modern PDF reader.
6. You will find the teacher information for all of the lessons in the chapter first, followed by all of the Journal and Blasts problems at the end of the document.

I appreciate that this layout, while convenient, is not currently as easily apparent for new users as it should be. We are working on updating this layout to make it more user-friendly and hope to complete the revamp in the next few months.

## When are the end of year moderation tasks coming?

**I would just like to know when the end of yr moderation tasks are coming out. We would like to use the yr 2 one prior to report cards which are due in just under 2 weeks.**

Thanks for emailing me.  With the moderation tasks, please use the baseline task for the next grade up as your end of year task.  That way you only need to do two tasks per year instead of three.  So for your year twos, use the baseline year 3 task as your end of year two moderation, and to give the next teacher the data for beginning year three.  Does that suit you?

## Does Facilitator Training include website access?

**Could you confirm for me whether the $450 Facilitator Training also includes access to the website, or do I need to purchase the $249.95 access?**

The Facilitator's course does not give you access to the website, but we give facilitators a 50% discount for three months after their training, so that would make the access $125 if you wanted to join.

## Prep/Foundation/Reception/Kindergarten/Pre-Primary resources:

**After looking around the website I can see lots of reference to years 1-7…what do foundation/reception/prep students do? Are there resources for this grade level available too?**

Thanks for contacting me.  There is material for all of Foundation level in the secure lesson plans section of the site which is suitable for Reception.  It does not have student work sheets, but does have lesson plans, suggestions for parents and also different scenarios for including numeracy in play-based environments.

## Year 8/9 Resources:

**Are Back to Front Maths resources similar to years 1 to 7 available for year 8 and Year 9? If so, where would I find this?**

We are currently working on writing year 8 and 9 resources but they are not yet available. Our previous material which was written for the Queensland curriculum is available through the Back to Front Maths site. You will need to align it with the Australian Curriculum, but it is a good start.

## Base line or moderation testing

**The Leadership team thought that a test at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year would be able to show student improvement in this area. We realise that you should not assess using one problem solving test however we have not yet convinced the Leadership Team. We are now in the position where we are required to implement a problem solving test across the Year Levels 1-6. We are trying to construct a test which has a similar concept but caters for each year level. We are really hoping that you could give us some direction or share some thoughts with us.**

In terms of formal tests, I'm not sure that there really are any that do a great job. However, have you had a look at our moderation tasks on [www.backtofrontmaths.com.au](http://www.backtofrontmaths.com.au)? There is one in the "free stuff" section that you can download and see if that is what you are after. Each task is designed to take about an hour, is designed specifically for each grade, and is completed under test-like conditions. There is one for the beginning, middle and end if the year. These assess problem solving as well as understanding and reasoning using the Australian Curriculum standards.

To be honest I would never use the moderation tasks as my sole form of assessment. They give a point-in-time measure only and really need to be paired with a problem solving journal or investigation. They would, however, be ideally suited for the circumstances that you are describing.

The only other standardized instrument that I would trust is NAPLAN. It gives pretty good assessment of understanding as well as some decent problem solving questions. It is not really specific enough to suit your needs though

I hope this helps.

## How is grading different in the Australian Curriculum? Why do your moderating tasks grade differently to the way we are used to?

**I am from WA. When grading, currently a C grade means you are at the target for that year level, B means you are one year higher and A means you are two years higher. Your moderating tasks grading doesn’t seem to follow this understanding. Are the grades for your moderating tasks in line with the Australian Curriculum or are they from an Eastern States curriculum.**

The current system of marking that you have described is based on a student's Fluency (content) level, whereas the moderating tasks are based on the other proficiency strands of Problem-solving, Reasoning and Understanding. The achievement standards in the Australian Curriculum are based on the proficiency strands. Our moderating tasks attempt to make that standard clearer. They are not designed as stand-alone tasks, and final grading needs to include Fluency as well. However, it is critically important to realize that Fluency alone cannot be used to grade student work, and it is the stated position of AAMT that if the proficiency strands are not implemented then students cannot achieve at the highest standard in mathematics.  The moderation tasks on the Back-to-Front Maths site have been created to reflect the intent of the Australian Curriculum and the achievement standards and are not based on any Eastern state.

You may also find it considerably more difficult for students to achieve at the highest levels using the moderating tasks than using other testing. They have been designed with deliberately low content, but with very difficult thinking. This is a similar basis as NAPLAN testing, which focuses on using non-standard questioning and the inclusion of misconceptions to assess deep Understanding rather than Fluency.

I hope that this is helpful. Please let me know if you need any more advice.

## Should I buy books or an online subscription? – *worked with Tierney before*

It is great to hear from you!  I'm excited to help you get started with Back-to-Front Maths.  Which school are you working at now?  
  
I would suggest that the best way to use the resources for your class would be to get an individual subscription to the website.  Our Reception resources are only available online as we haven't had them printed yet.  A subscription includes access and photocopying rights to all of the resources from all of the grades for you as an individual.  Lesson plans, moderation tasks, planning tools and investigations are all included.  The cost of a subscription for the first 12 months is $249.95.  If you would prefer books I can also send you out a Teaching Resource Pack for year 1, however everything in the books is available online in the Lessons Bank section.  Let me know what you need.

If you wish to go ahead, please nominate a password and I will set it up for you.  Once I hear back from you I will set up your access over the next two days so that you can start using the resources immediately.  We can sort out an invoice after that.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

## Small school subscription request (120 or less students):

Thanks for contacting us about getting a subscription to Back-to-Front Maths for your school.  Are you hoping for students to access the resources online, or is it for your teaching staff?  The site is designed for teachers to download PDF documents rather than for students to interact with.  If you would like I can set up temporary access for you to assess the resources and decide if it is what you need.  
  
The cost per student is normally $6.95 for 12 months for whole school access, and $9.95 per student for partial school access.  We also have a small schools work program available which might suit you.  It was written specifically for multi-age classes.  It makes use of differentiation and some fairly clever program writing to make sure that you cover all of the AC while catering for multiple grades all at the same time and still have some flexible lessons each week.  The program can be purchased for $150 (once off), and the resources are already put into simple files to download for each couple of weeks with lesson plans and activities.

If you wish to go ahead, please nominate a school password and email address.  Your username will be set as **schoolname**  
  
Once I hear back from you I will set up your access over the next two days so that your teachers can start using the resources immediately.  We can sort out an invoice after that.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

## Professional Development or T&D request: South Australian School

We will be offering T&D in term 3, but I would like to find a way to help you before.  Here are a few ideas:

1. We could organise a Skype session for you with one of our consultants for an after-school session.  The idea would be to introduce the program to you and give you the basics for how it works.
2. We can put you in touch with some schools that are using the product and you could visit them or arrange to have them visit you to see how it works.
3. You could contact Mary-Anne Rischmueller at the Barossa Regional Office and see if one of her numeracy coaches could come and do the PD for you.  She and her staff have all been trained as Facilitators.

We are currently also working on producing videos that show case Tierney teaching a number of the lessons, but these are still a few months away from release.  Once finished, there will be 8 videos showing one lesson each from Reception to year 7 - all in the key ideas in Number.

We will also add you to our list to make sure that you know about any upcoming training events such as Facilitator Training.

Would you like to speak with us about any of the options above?