

Learner Engagement

Creating digital learning experiences that learners want to complete



Assessment in Online Learning

Keeping learners engaged — without the pressure

Assessment Usually Fails in One of Two Directions

1 Too Easy

Obvious answers, no real stakes. Learners click through without engaging - the check confirms nothing.

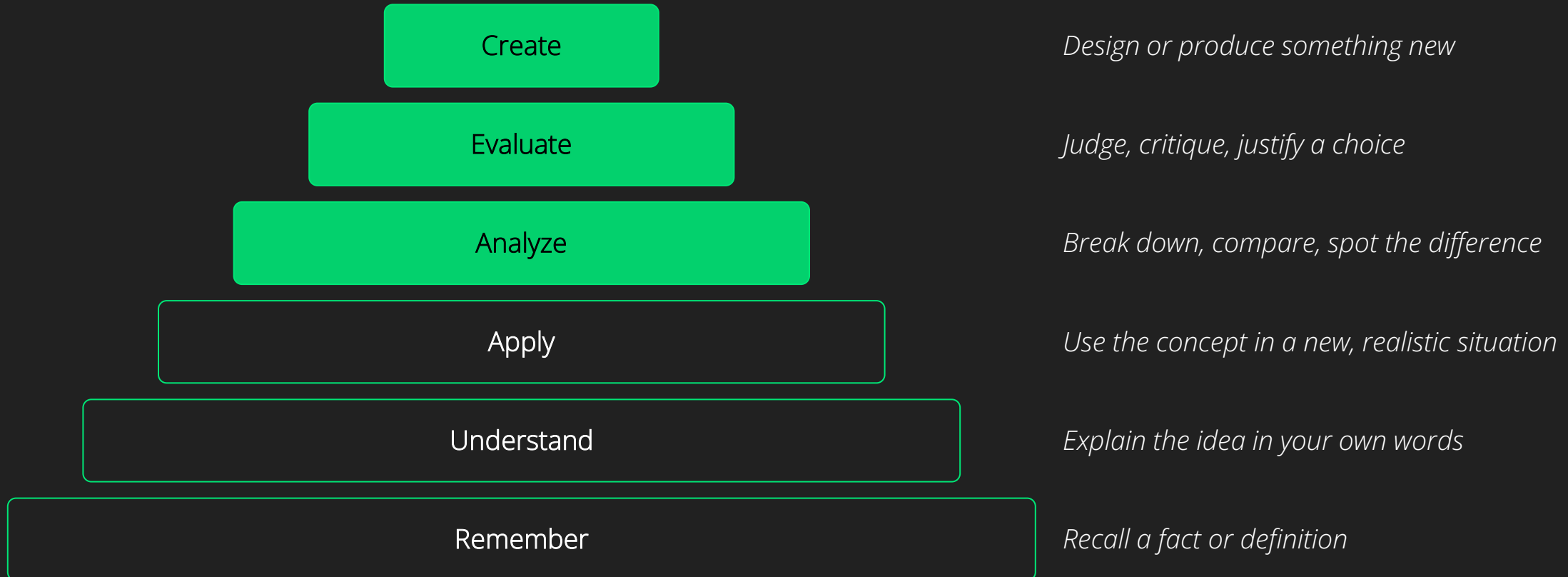
2 Too High-Stakes

Feels like an exam. Creates anxiety, and anxious learners disengage rather than think.

The goal: match assessment type and question quality to where the learner is in the journey.

A Quick Framework: Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy organises learning into levels of thinking, from remembering information to creating new ideas.



Most knowledge checks default to the bottom two levels. Everything in this talk is about climbing higher, deliberately.

Three Assessment Types, One Spectrum



Frequent, low-stakes checks build confidence early — reserve high stakes for when learners are ready.

Knowledge Checks: Reinforce While It's Fresh

1

Embedded in the lesson

Placed right after a concept is taught, not saved for the end

2

Ungraded, immediate feedback

Nothing rides on the answer - it's a self-check, not an evaluation, use comprehensive feedback

3

Use them often

Frequency is what keeps them low-pressure and builds confidence

BLOOM'S: REMEMBER · UNDERSTAND

EXAMPLE

A 3-option question dropped in right after a product explanation - answered in seconds, no grade attached.

That's fine - a knowledge check is meant to be quick. Just don't let every assessment in the course stop here.

Formative vs Summative

FORMATIVE

- Module-level, not lesson-level
- Diagnostic - checks readiness to move on
- Informs pacing and extra support
- Still low-stakes

BLOOM'S: UNDERSTAND · APPLY

SUMMATIVE

- Course-level, end of the journey
- High stakes - grades or certification
- Confirms mastery of all objectives
- Use sparingly, once learners are ready

BLOOM'S: APPLY · ANALYZE · EVALUATE

Scenario-Based Assessment: Paint the Picture



Tests application, not recall

Jumps straight past Remember into Apply and Analyze



Feels like a situation, not an exam

Same knowledge tested, lower perceived pressure



Surfaces real misconceptions

e.g., would the learner overstep their boundary with the team?

BLOOM'S: APPLY → EVALUATE

Scenario

Zanele is a junior manager in a team that works across two shifts.

For the past month, the afternoon shift has complained that morning shift handover notes are incomplete. The morning shift says they are too busy at the end of their shift to write detailed notes.

Three customer follow-ups were missed because the next action was not recorded clearly. Customers have started complaining that they must repeat information.

Zanele does not want to blame either shift. She wants to improve the handover process so that the problem does not continue.

Questions

1. What shows that this is an improvement opportunity?
2. Which action should Zanele take first?
3. Which improvement is most practical?
4. How should Zanele test the improvement?
5. Why is improvement not the same as blame?

AI-Generated MCQs: Fix the Distractor Problem

Question: When a manager delegates a task to a team member, what happens to accountability for the outcome?



WEAK DISTRACTOR (default)

- A. The manager remains accountable for the outcome, even though the team member is now responsible for doing the task
- B. Accountability disappears once the task is delegated
- C. The team member becomes accountable directly to the CEO

TESTS: REMEMBER ONLY



STRONG DISTRACTOR (prompted)

- A. The manager remains accountable for the outcome, even though the team member is now responsible for doing the task
- B. Accountability transfers fully to the team member once the task is delegated
- C. The manager and team member share equal accountability, since the manager steps back once the task is delegated

TESTS: ANALYZE

Default AI output: one obvious answer, two throwaway options that test nothing.

Prompt tip: ask the AI for distractors that force Analyse-level discrimination, not Remember-level recall.

Feedback Is Half the Equation

WEAK FEEDBACK

"Correct." / "Not quite."

BLOOM'S: UNDERSTAND - APPLY

STRONG FEEDBACK

Your answer is correct.

Clear organisational structures help employees understand who has authority to make decisions and where accountability lies. When reporting lines are unclear, confusion and delays often occur.

Good feedback explains the reasoning, not just the verdict.

Takeaways

1

Sequence by stakes

Frequent, low-stakes checks early - high stakes only once learners are ready

2

Climb Bloom's deliberately

Don't let every question default to Remember - push toward Apply and Analyze

3

Use scenarios

They jump straight to Apply and Analyze while lowering perceived pressure

4

Prompt AI deliberately

Ask for Analyze-level distractors and pair every question with real feedback

Voice-Over Lessons as a Reading Primer

Keeping learners engaged — without the pressure

VO's Job Isn't to Teach — It's to Prime

When combined with a reading, the job of the VO is to prepare the learner for the reading.

ADVANCE ORGANIZERS

Ausubel

Giving learners a structure before dense material improves how well they retain and organize it once they get there.

PRE-TRAINING PRINCIPLE

Mayer

Learners do better in a lesson when they already know the key concept names and characteristics before the detail arrives.

VO and Reading Do Different Jobs

VOICE-OVER

- Tone, pacing, and emphasis
- Walks through a hard idea out loud
- Builds a quick mental model
- Best for: the 2-3 hardest concepts

READING

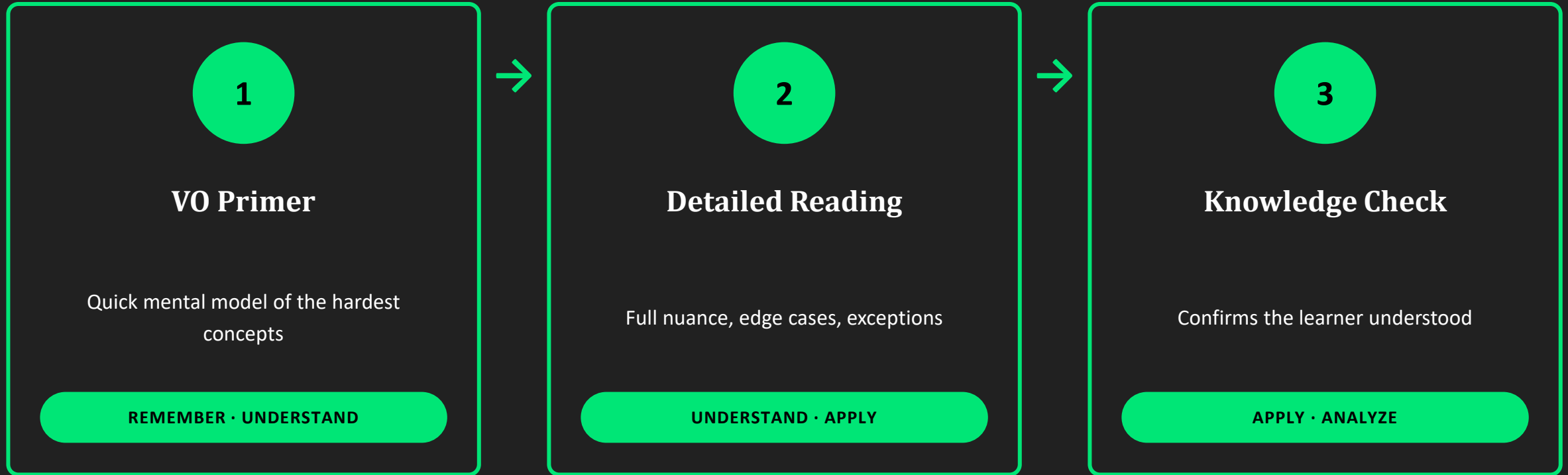
- Density and reference value
- Learner controls the pace
- Supports scanning, re-reading, searching
- Best for: full detail, nuance, exceptions

VO's Job Isn't to Teach — It's to Prime

- 1** **Scope narrowly**
Only the concepts likely to trip someone up - not a preview of the reading's outline
- 2** **Name the purpose**
Tell the learner what the lesson is for, so it doesn't feel like a gate before the 'real' content
- 3** **Bridge, don't summarize**
End by pointing at what's coming, not recapping what was just said

Scoped to reading-preferring learners - audio still matters for accessibility and on-the-go contexts.

One Framework, Two Parts



The VO and the reading aren't separate systems - they're two rungs of the same ladder, checked by the same assessment principles from Part 1.

Thank you

Questions in the chat or at the end