Using CATs in Online Courses

The Background Knowledge Probe Overview

- **Teacher's Purpose:**
  - Helps teachers determine the starting point and appropriate level of the lesson
  - Allows teachers to assess learners prior understanding of the topic

- **Learner's Purpose:**
  - Focuses attention on the important material
  - Can serve as a preview and review

- **Timing:**
  - First class meeting
  - Orientation session
  - Assigned to answer at beginning of module
  - Complete both at beginning and end of module -- compare results

- **Hint:**
  - Ask at least one question that everyone should be able to answer
  - Ask at least one question that you deem to be difficult

- **Feedback:**
  - Review responses
  - E-mail students individually if appropriate with additional resources
  - Post results in an announcement or discussion board.

The Background Knowledge Probe Example

- **Topic:**
  - Web Servers

- **Method:**
  - Survey with one multiple choice and two short answer questions.

- **Question:**
  - "Describe the purpose of a web server."
  - "Choose the most popular web server from the list provided below"
  - "What reasons do you have for your choice?"

- **Feedback:**
  - Learners complete the survey and the course management system collects responses.
  - Instructor reads responses and may e-mail individual students or post selected results in an announcement or discussion thread.

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