

# Backward Design

## INTRODUCTION

Backward design is a three-step process that starts with the end goal and works backwards. It helps ensure that *you* are making the most important curricular decisions for your course, rather than a textbook publisher.

This instructional design approach was developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in their book *Understanding by Design* (1998, 2005). This tipsheet is adapted from Bowen, R. S. (2017).

## A CLOSER LOOK

### Stage 1 - Result

Identify the desired results or learning goals. Wiggins and McTighe distinguish between the following three types of knowledge for students to have acquired at the end of your course:

- **Knowledge worth being familiar with.** This is the lowest-priority content information included in the lesson/unit/course.
- **Knowledge and skills important to know and do.** This includes the facts, concepts, principles, processes, strategies, and methods students should know after completion of course.
- **Enduring understandings and “big ideas.”** This refers to the ideas that students should remember after the course ends.

### Stage 2 - Evidence

Identify the assessments and performance tasks that will demonstrate student’s understanding. Helpful questions you can use at this stage include:

- **How will I know that students have achieved the desired results?**
- **What will I accept as evidence of student understanding?**



### Take Note!

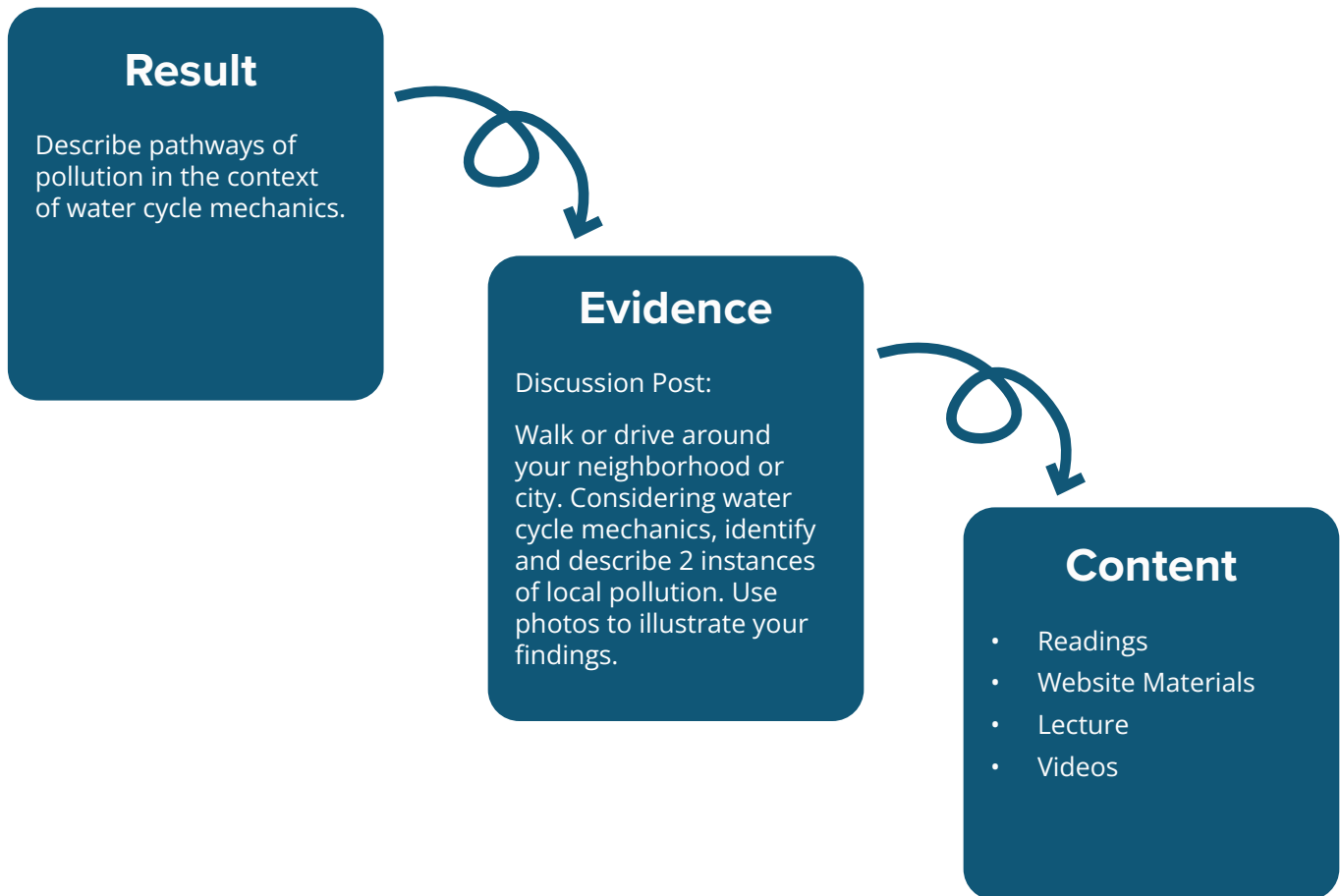
It is important to align the assessments and content to the results/learning goals established in Stage 1.

### Stage 3 - Content

Determine the strategies, activities, and materials you will provide in your course so that students can complete the assessments and tasks.

Think about these four areas:

- **Knowledge and skills that students need to perform effectively**
- **Activities that provide students with the needed knowledge and skills**
- **Content to be taught and how it should be taught**
- **Materials and resources best suited to accomplish these goals**



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Bowen, R. S. (2017). *Understanding by Design*. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. Retrieved 5/24/2024 from <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/understanding-by-design/>.

Backward design template: <https://jaymctighe.com/resources/>