

Time-Based vs. Mastery-Based: What's the Difference?

In Time-Based Learning Systems...	In Mastery-Based Learning Systems...
<p>Expectations Are Implied or Variable:</p> <p>Learning goals may be broad or unclear, and students are often unsure what success looks like or how their work will be evaluated.</p>	<p>Expectations Are Clear and Transparent:</p> <p>Learning goals and success criteria are explicit and visible. Students understand what they are working toward and can use that clarity to guide their learning and self-assess progress.</p>
<p>Learning Is Guided by a Set Plan:</p> <p>Learning follows a predetermined sequence based on the curriculum. Instruction moves forward as planned, with limited adjustment based on what individual students need next.</p>	<p>Learning Is Driven by Student Needs:</p> <p>Learning is shaped by where students are and what they need next. Students set goals, make learning choices, and track their progress, while teachers provide structure, guidance, and support.</p>
<p>Learning Moves at a Fixed Pace:</p> <p>Students progress through content at a set speed, often tied to a shared schedule, regardless of individual readiness.</p>	<p>Learning Moves at Flexible Paces:</p> <p>Students may move at different speeds—individually, in groups, or with the class—and make decisions about how to progress based on their goals and needs.</p>
<p>Learning Access Is Limited Over Time:</p> <p>When the class moves on, access to earlier material often closes, even if learning is incomplete.</p>	<p>Learning Access Stays Open:</p> <p>Students can revisit prior material, continue practicing, and choose when to return to strengthen their understanding. Learning does not expire when the class moves forward.</p>
<p>Assessment Is High-Stakes and Time-Bound:</p> <p>Assessment often happens at the end of learning and captures performance at a single point in time, with limited opportunities to revisit or improve.</p>	<p>Assessment Is Ongoing and Iterative:</p> <p>Assessment is embedded throughout the learning process. Students receive feedback, revise their work, and decide when they are ready to demonstrate their learning.</p>
<p>Struggle Leads to Disengagement:</p> <p>When students don't understand something right away, learning continues forward. Students may fall behind or lose confidence, with limited structured opportunities to re-engage.</p>	<p>Struggle Leads to Re-Engagement and Growth:</p> <p>Students learn to respond to challenges by revisiting material, seeking support, and continuing to improve over time, building confidence in their ability to grow.</p>