The Tech Savvy Classroom
with Shawn McCusker

Personalising Learning with
Branching Google Forms

■ By using the branching feature of Google Forms, you can set up conditional logic conditions, creating flexibility to differentiate, personalise or allow for choice in a very simple, straightforward way. Digital Learning's edtech expert Shawn McCusker outlines how to use this often overlooked feature.
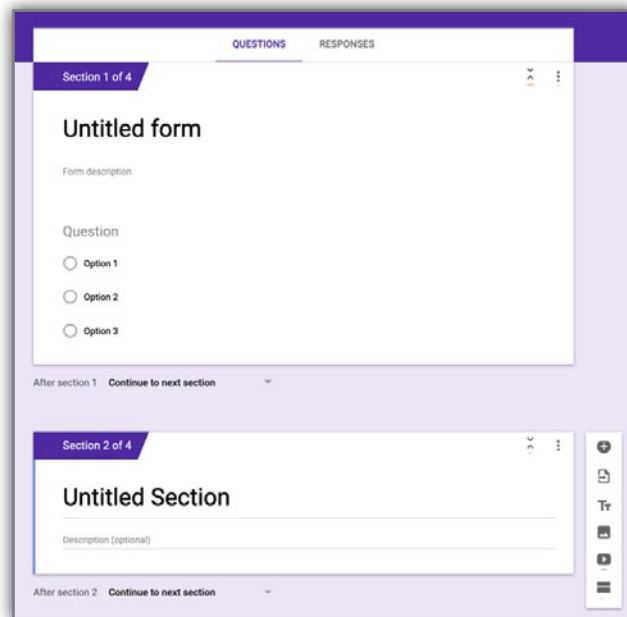
Sometimes when we seek to improve our instruction we go looking for new tools. But more often than not, one of our tried and true tools has the ability to go farther and do more. The Branch Logic feature in Google Forms can do just that. Google Forms is a teacher favourite for collecting information, formative assessment and simple quizzes. It's also a great way to collect and then share student work, ideas and feedback. Its flexibility has also allowed me to use it for collaborative writing activities.

But one key Google Forms feature is often missed or forgotten and it is one that creates incredible flexibility for student learning and is simple to learn.
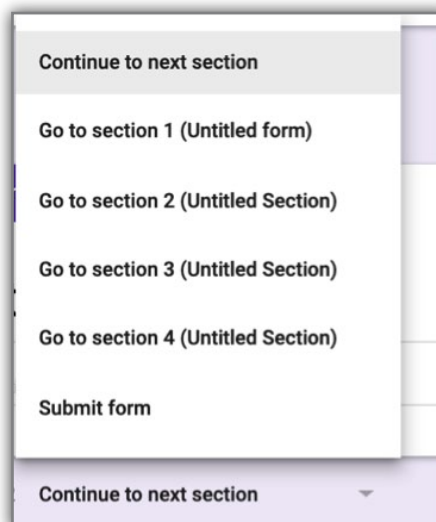
In the simplest terms, the branching feature in Google Forms allows you to create a form that has multiple paths. Like a 'choose your own adventure' story, the path you take depends on the choices that you make. If a student gets an answer correct, they can skip to the next section; if they get the answer wrong, they can be provided with an opportunity to understand the concept better such as an article or video. You can also offer students choices for how they would like to learn: video, audio, written visual? But before we go into more potential use cases, let's look at how it works.

To begin creating a branched Google Form, begin with a new form. Then select the bottom option 'Add Section' in the menu on the right. This will create a new section of the form. Once new sections are created, you will have two ways to create unique learning paths in your form.

Path option #1: Unique paths by section – Once you have created sections, you will see a branching option below each. This menu will allow you to direct students to any section in the form.

Path option #2: Unique paths by answer – To use this option, click on the three dots on the lower right corner of a section. This will reveal another menu. Select the 'Go to section based on answer' option.

Once this option is activated, a menu will appear next to each question allowing a student to be directed to a place in the form based upon their response.

Building a branching document is no more difficult than that. All that remains for the teacher to do is decide what kind of experience they want to create for their students.

For example, a teacher can create a branched Google Form that tests a student's understanding of a learning objective. If the student is successful, they go on to the next question. However, if the student cannot show mastery of the standard, they are directed to a short video, reading or audio recording that reteaches the concept. It is even possible for the student to be directed to the choice of those three options so that they can pick the one that is most comfortable to them.

Here is an example of a Branched Google form that lets students personalise their learning.

Choose Your Path Lesson: try it several times to see how the variety of paths to learning are created.

There are a variety of ways that this tool can differentiate, personalise or allow for choice. Here are just a few:

- **Differentiation**
  Allow students to decide the type of instruction they receive.
- **Student Choice**
  Give students a choice of the topic used to teach a concept. (For example, learn about voting rights by reading about women, or property ownership or voting age restrictions?)
- **Standards-Based Learning**
  Identify students who need remediation for specific learning objectives.
- **Personalised Learning**
  Allow students to choose the type of questions they will answer or the type of assessment that they will complete. (i.e. short essay, several multiple choice questions or an audio submission?)

The branching feature mirrors the type of decision making that computer programmers use, creating conditional paths as the process of learning progresses. For teachers, this can be a powerful way to meet the needs of various learners and give them access to support materials.

As more and more schools explore personalised or blended learning, tools such as the Google Forms Branching feature can help teachers create paths to understanding that can offer meaningful support to students who are learning asynchronously, and generate meaningful individual experiences that respect the needs of each learner.

How might you build an experience using Google Forms that would benefit your students?

Shawn McCusker is a teacher of history, social studies and government. He has worked with the Center for Teaching History with Technology and EdTechTeacher for the past 8 years. His podcast 'So We've Been Thinking' can be found at www.sowevebeenthinking.com and other teaching tips can be found on his website and blog at gowhereyougrow.wordpress.com.