INFERENCE vs. INFERENCING

In **PROBE2** Reading Comprehension Assessment we use the question type **inference** and we also have a teaching resource called **KEY into inference**.

Sometimes **KEY into inference** is incorrectly referred to as **KEY into inferencing**.

I can only find inferencing (instead of inference) on some teacher websites and blogs.
I have heard teachers using inferencing as a verb and quite a number using it as an adjective, yet the word is not entered (in any form) in dictionaries such as the Oxford, Chambers or Websters (Collins enters it as a noun - used in Psycholinguistics).

WHAT DO I THINK? I would urge teachers to use the noun 'inference' instead of 'inferencing' and to never use **inferencing** as a verb or an adjective.

> **Infer** is the verb, **inferring** is the present participle, **inferred** is the past tense / past participle.
>
> **inferable**, or more commonly, **inferential** is the adjective.
>
> **SAY** 'These are inferential questions.' **NOT** 'These are inferencing questions.'

IMPLY or INFER

There is also confusion for some teachers as well as for some students over the verbs **infer** and **imply**. Because they are closely related, it is very easy to regard them as interchangeable. They are not!

SO, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

IMPLY   Writers, speakers etc., insinuate (hint at) something rather than saying it directly.

INFER   Readers, listeners, etc., deduce what is insinuated (hinted at).

EXAMPLE 1

"Class. Please get your pencils and writing books out," said the teacher.
- The teacher is **implying** that the students in the class are going to write something.
- The students **infer** from the instruction that they are going to write something.

EXAMPLE 2

Matt: The teacher says I am not doing as well as I could with my essay writing.
Jeff: Would you like me to help you become a better writer?
Matt: Thanks. I would appreciate that.
Jeff: Well, first open your book and pick up your pencil.
Matt: Are you inferring that I am that incapable?
Jeff: No. I was implying it. You were inferring it!

> "The English language has a deceptive air of simplicity; so have some little frocks;
> but they are both not the kind of thing you can run up in half an hour with a machine."   Dorothy L. Sayers