As more and more products claim “adaptive learning” capabilities, the term has acquired a certain fuzziness. Often, the distinctions between the different degrees and types of adaptive learning are unclear. In order to select appropriate software, it is important to understand the range of capabilities provided.

Below are five examples of types of software that exist on the market today. These examples represent some, but not all, of the possible features at work in adaptive learning software. This type of software is designed to support learners in ways similar to how they might be helped by a private tutor. A classroom teacher may use the software, and the data collected, to support decision-making about class instruction as well as targeted assistance to individual students.

**EXAMPLE 1**
Interactive & Self-Paced

- Student views content at his or her own pace.
- Student answers all questions of summative assessment.
- Student receives immediate feedback about what questions were answered correctly and incorrectly.
- If enough answers are correct, then new content is unlocked.

**EXAMPLE 2**
Adaptive at the Content Level

- Student views content at his or her own pace.
- Student answers all questions of summative assessment.
- Student receives a specific explanation for each wrong answer.
- Student receives references to sections of the content to review.

**EXAMPLE 3**
Adaptive at the Assessment Level

- Student views content at his or her own pace.
- Student answers one question of a summative assessment.
- If the answer is incorrect, the student receives an easier question.
- If the answer is correct, the student receives a harder question.
EXAMPLE 4
Adaptive at both Assessment & Content Levels

- Student answers all questions of a formative assessment.
- Student receives a tailored learning plan combining content and practice activities.
- After completing the learning plan, the student takes a summative assessment.
- The results of the summative assessment inform the generation of a new learning plan.

EXAMPLE 5
Adaptive Assessment & Content with High Granularity

- Student answers the first question of an assessment by providing each step taken in solving a math or science problem.
- The student receives feedback based on comparing the steps entered by the student to effective methods for solving the problem.
- The student’s performance on the first question informs the difficulty of the subsequent question(s) presented.