

Active Learning

 www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/engaging-students/active-learning.html

What is active learning?

- *Active learning is "anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2).*
- *Felder & Brent (2009) define active learning as "anything course-related that all students in a class session are called upon to do other than simply watching, listening and taking notes" (p. 2).*
- *Active learning strategies can be as short as a few minutes long.*
- *Active learning techniques can be integrated into a lecture or any other classroom setting relatively easily. Even large classrooms can involve learning activities beyond the traditional lecture format.*

Why incorporate active learning techniques?

Research suggests that audience attention in lectures starts to wane every 10-20 minutes. Incorporating active learning techniques once or twice during a 50-minute class (twice to or thrice for a 75-minute class) will encourage student engagement. Active learning also:

- *Reinforces important material, concepts, and skills.*
- *Provides more frequent and immediate feedback to students.*
- *Addresses different student learning styles.*
- *Provides students with an opportunity to think about, talk about, and process course material.*
- *Creates personal connections to the material for students, which increases their motivation to learn.*
- *Allows students to practice important skills, such as collaboration, through pair and group work.*
- *Builds self-esteem through conversations with other students.*
- *Creates a sense of community in the classroom through increased student-student and instructor-student interaction.*

How can you cover the content when using active learning?

- *Consider what students can do outside of class to more effectively prepare for in-class activities:*
 - *Incorporate pre-class reading assignments.*

- *Assign videos for students to watch and answer questions about.*
- *Require students to complete pre-class quizzes (to ensure that students have read the material) on [Blackboard](#).*

How can you incorporate active learning into various classroom settings?

- *Become familiar with a few active learning techniques. Some that are easier to implement are the "one minute paper," and "think-pair-share" (see "CTE Active Learning Strategies" in the resources below for more detailed instructions on how to incorporate them).*
- *Choose one or two techniques and modify them so that they address learning goals in your class.*
- *When implementing active learning techniques, follow these general steps:*
 - *Use activities to draw attention to issues and content you feel are most critical.*
 - *Establish rules of conduct and civility to encourage appropriate participation.*
 - *Introduce the activity and explain the learning benefit.*
 - *Control the time cost by giving students a time limit to complete the task.*
 - *Stop the activity and debrief. Call on a few students or groups of students to share their thoughts and tie them in to the next steps of your lecture.*
- *Consider using [classroom response technologies](#), [video clips](#), and even smartphones and laptops to facilitate active learning activities.*

What are some considerations for integrating active learning techniques?

Implementing any new teaching technique can be a daunting or challenging task.

- *Start small. Choose one simple technique to try in one class.*
- *Think about how you will facilitate the process each step of the way. How will you introduce the activity? Do you need to provide visual aids with directions? How much time will you give students? How will you debrief? Smaller groups may be easier to manage than larger ones.*
- *Consider the logistics of getting a large group of students back on track after an activity. Clap your hands or flash the lights to get students to stop and refocus their attention on you.*

Some students may not accept new learning activities with complete ease. Rather than trying to engage all students, focus on engaging *more* students in *more meaningful* ways.

- Again, start small. Integrating many active learning techniques in one session may irritate students and discourage their participation.
- Explain the benefits for using active learning techniques and connect the activity to student learning outcomes for the class.
- Use a quick icebreaker or two early in the term to help students become comfortable with one another and to set expectations for an interactive class.

Resources

[CTE Active Learning Techniques](#) (CU NetID required to access. Link redirects to login page.)
[Classroom Structures](#)



Past CTE Presentation Materials

- [Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom Handout](#),
James Eison, Professor of Higher Education at University of South Florida



References

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