

## Low-Tech Classroom Response Systems (Clickers)

Have you wanted to use “clickers” in class to gauge students’ understanding, but you don’t necessarily want to spend the time developing the PowerPoints or the questions online that some systems use? Or perhaps you’re not sure if you want students to invest in them because you’re not sure how often you’ll use them, and you don’t want them to waste money to only use them a time or two during the semester, or if you’re considering a web site like <http://www.polleverywhere.com>, you’re not sure you want students getting out their phones after you’ve worked so hard to get them to put the devices away! You may want to try something low-tech to see if you like using a student response system first, too. Here are two ways to make low-tech “clickers” for class that don’t involve cell phones or other electronic gadgets.

The first is to create a Word document that has a table with 2 columns and 3 rows, placing a letter in 5 of the boxes and a ? in the 6<sup>th</sup> box for the choices students might have. The table would look like this:

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>?</b>

Then print them and give one to each student (or post them on Blackboard and ask students to print and bring them to class). Students can then fold the sheet of paper to display the letter for the answer option that is “correct” or that they most agree with. They can display a ? if they truly have no idea.

A second low-tech way to do this is to buy different colored index cards and give students one colored card for A, another color for B, and so on, remembering to have a color for ?, as well. You can distribute “packets” of the cards on the first day of class and ask students to always bring them.

While using these low-tech paper “student response systems” does not allow the anonymity that their electronic counterparts do, the paper method does allow for you to still get an idea of what students do or don’t understand. You also will have the chance to ask them to find someone who has a different answer displayed than they do and discuss why they each chose the answer they did. Then have everyone share their answers again, changing if they need to do so. Therefore, the giving up of anonymity provides some chances for interaction that can’t be had in quite the same way as with a “real clicker.”

Submitted by  
Wren Mills, PhD  
Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching  
Western Kentucky University  
[www.wku.edu/teaching](http://www.wku.edu/teaching)