

Activities to Make Lectures Interactive

In order to retain student attention and facilitate learning, consider integrating a variety of activities into a lecture-based course. Start by finding natural breaks in the content material and break up the lecture into shorter segments. In between the shorter lectures, add activities that require the students to review and apply their new learning and interact with each other. Mix it up by incorporating different activities each week. The change of pace, interaction, and variety can help to enliven the classroom atmosphere and encourage deeper learning for every student. Some activities to consider are listed below.

Skeleton notes – Create a handout with key points of the lecture on the left margin, leaving space for students to fill in notes during lecture. Pair up or group students to compare notes and fill in gaps.

Press Conference – Ask students to work in teams to write and organize questions, and then interview the instructor in a simulated press conference.

Clusters – Break reading material into sections and have each individual or group read an assigned section, becoming an “expert” on that section. Each individual or group then teaches the others about the specific material that they learned.

Select the Best Response – Students are presented with a question or scenario and then asked to consider which one of three responses best answers it. This can be used to recall and apply information presented in lecture.

Correct the Error – This can be used in math or lab courses. The instructor creates an intentional error based on important lecture material. Students then work to correct the error.

Support a Statement – The Instructor provides a statement for which students must locate support in lecture notes or textbooks and give data to support the statement.

Re-order Steps – The instructor presents a series of steps in a mixed order and the students are asked to sequence the items correctly.

Short Video Clip – A short, relevant video clip can be useful for introducing a new topic, punctuating the main point, or providing a springboard for class discussion.

One Minute Paper – Near the end of the class period, ask students to write for one minute on the main 1-2 points of the class. This assignment allows you to gauge student comprehension and gives students an incentive to absorb and comprehend course material.

Student-created Visuals - Ask students to work in small groups to create visual study aids such as flow charts, graphs, diagrams, artwork, maps, or photography. A variation on this activity could produce student-created study guides prior to each major exam.

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