

## Warm-Ups

*"I got to get on the good foot  
Got to do it on the good foot  
Do it with the good foot"*

--"Get on the Good Foot," written by Fred Wesley, James Brown, Joe Mims; performed by James Brown

How can you get off on a good foot at the beginning of each class period? How can you wake up your students and get them ready to get down to the business of learning?

One very effective teaching tip that I have used for years is what I call "warm-ups." Warm-ups are like pre-exercise stretches, but for the mind (and the attention span).

Usually on the second day of class, I inform my students that at the beginning of each class period throughout the semester, we will devote the first 5-7 minutes to a warm-up. Warm-ups consist of something to challenge the mind, engage the students, and begin class periods in a fun way. Sometimes warm-ups relate to something we've been discussing in class, sometimes they do not. Some of my favorite warm-ups are games in which I compete against the class, who acts as a team. Games that work well for warm-ups include Twenty Questions and Hangman. Usually, the students are the guessers, but sometimes I take on that role and try to figure out what my students are thinking. At other times, the students and I work together as a team in playing against web versions of these games:

<http://www.20q.net/>

<http://www.hangman.no/>

<http://www.hangman-online.com/>

The online game Sporcle also works well, and users are continually adding new games:

<http://www.sporcle.com/>

Online word games are also great. There are many located at: <http://www.wuzzlesandpuzzles.com/>

Riddles also work nicely, as do short (usually humorous) YouTube clips. These are just a few suggestions. Anything that is brief, interactive, and involves solving a puzzle or having a laugh would probably work as a warm-up. In fact, as the semester progresses, I often have students emailing me with suggestions for warm-ups.

I am amazed at how actively students engage in these kinds of warm-ups, and it does seem to make a difference in motivation levels. For 90 minute classes, I sometimes save the warm-ups as a mid-class refresher. To me, five minutes of class time is a small price to pay for my students' attention.

Submitted by

Fred W. Sanborn, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Psychology & Director, Teaching & Learning Center

North Carolina Wesleyan College

[fwsanborn@ncwc.edu](mailto:fwsanborn@ncwc.edu)