

Use PowerPoint to Prompt Engaging Learning Activities During Class

Dilbert depicts PowerPoint presentations as a direct route to slumber and employee revolt. PowerPoint presentations need not be deadly. Instructors can create slides that prompt class activities that engage students, motivate meaningful class discussion, and promote deep learning (Berk, 2011).

Instructors commonly organize and plan the presentation of content while they create a set of PowerPoint slides. Consider creating slides to plan and prompt engaging learning activities at key points during a class presentation.

Instructors who use personal response systems (clickers) can add a slide that poses a question to evaluate student understanding of a critical concept or to ask students to apply a model or principle to a specific application. Allow students a moment to think individually or discuss the question in small groups before they record their response to the question with their clickers.

An instructor who does not use clickers can present a slide that poses a question as a prompt for small group discussion (e.g., as a pair-share activity) or a brief in-class written response to the question (e.g., a minute paper).

Share responses to the prompt with the entire class. If using clicker questions, display a chart summarizing the pattern of responses from the group. Otherwise, ask for a show of hands for typical responses or initiate a class discussion in which several groups report the consensus response from their discussion.

Wrap up the discussion and refocus attention on the content that triggered the activity.

- If common misconceptions about the critical concept emerge in the pattern of responses, spend some time defusing these misconceptions.
- If the prompt asked for application to a real world problem, discuss and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the applications proposed.
- If the prompt asked for opinions on a controversial topic, ask the class to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the different positions that emerge.

Include no more than one or two of these engagement slides during a class session to engage student interest and focus attention on critical points for the day's lesson.

Berk, R. A. (2011). "PowerPoint® engagement" techniques to foster deep learning. *Journal of Faculty Development*, 25, 45-48.

Bruff, D. (2009). *Teaching with classroom response systems: Creating active learning environments*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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