



Some of my students aren't paying attention!

Do you struggle during a 50-minute or longer class to keep your students engaged? Are you interested in trying some simple interactive activities? Most faculty have heard the suggestion to intersperse lecture every 15 minutes with some type of active learning activity to engage students. Bonwell and Edison (1991) have defined active learning as “instructional activities that involve students doing things and thinking about what they are doing.” Active learning activities can help to promote higher level thinking such as application, analysis, evaluation, and creation. Although, some activities can be more complex, I've included a few simple, easy to implement ones below.

1. **Think-Pair-Share:** Students work in pairs to solve a problem or explore an issue. This method can be also be used to compare notes during class or homework assignments.
2. **Ask the Winner** – Ask students to independently solve a problem presented in class. After revealing the answer, instruct those who got it right to raise their hands; then, tell the other students to talk to someone with a raised hand to better understand the question and how to solve it.
3. **One Minute Paper** – Provide students with 3 x 5 index cards or paper at the beginning of class. Ask them to write a short reflective summary at the end of class listing the most important point (MIP) of the class. Another version is to ask for the muddiest point (MP) to be written at the end of a class or to ask for both MIP/MP feedback. The instructor could post answers to muddiest points on a discussion board or use these questions to start the next class. This activity also provides formative feedback about your teaching. Note, I've used a slightly different version of these cards. To promote reading before class, I require a combined MIP/MP card due at the beginning of class. The students earn points for doing the assigned journal readings and are better prepared to discuss the articles. In addition, I have a list of potential discussion questions.

For those who desire more information, check out the references below. Which ones will you try?

Resources

Queen's University Centre for Teaching and Learning. (n.d.). Teaching and learning in higher education module 3: Active learning. Retrieved October 14, 2019, from http://www.queensu.ca/teachingandlearning/modules/active/04_what_is_active_learning.html

- *An interactive module with an overview of active learning research and suggestions for implementing activities within small, large, and online courses.*

Smith, G., & Brame, C. (2019). 10 steps to getting started – An active learning cheat sheet. Retrieved from Vanderbilt University's Center for Teaching website:

<https://cdn.vanderbilt.edu/vu-wp0/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/2019/04/22143029/Active-Learning-Cheat-Sheet.pdf>

- *Outlines the procedure for implementing an active learning activity with links to research articles and more great resources. This handy cheat sheet was the result of a Faculty Learning Community!*

Yee, K. (2019). Interactive techniques. Retrieved from the University of Central Florida's Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning website:

https://fctl.ucf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/02/interactive_techniques.pdf

- *One of best lists I've ever seen! Yee describes 237 interactive activities. Stacy Boyer-Davis shared this handout during her August faculty development presentation.*