ACTIVE LEARNING

Active learning encompasses different teaching approaches which shift the focus from the teacher delivering course content, to the student actively engaged with the course content. It includes most activities that students do in a classroom other than passively listening to an instructor's lecture.

"Active learning is generally defined as any instructional method that engages students in the learning process. Active learning requires students to do meaningful learning activities and think about what they are doing" (Prince, 2004). This teaching approach allows students to interact with course content while in class purposefully as well as interact with each other in structured learning activities. Including engaging activities throughout a class, can prevent students from becoming bored, take part in off-task activities, and be disruptive to their peers.

When students sit and passively watch or listen to lectures – whether in person/face-to-face or online – they are not actively engaging with the content. If students are actively involved in the content, they will learn more, be more satisfied, and be more successful in their courses.

Below is a list of activities to incorporate active learning into the classroom:

- **Clarification Pauses**: This simple technique fosters "active listening." Throughout a lecture, particularly after stating an important point or defining a key concept, stop presenting and allow students time to think about the information. After waiting, ask if anyone needs to have anything clarified. Ask students to review their notes and ask questions about what they've written so far.
- **Writing Activities such as the "Minute Paper":** At an appropriate point in the lecture, ask the students to take out a blank sheet of paper. Then, state the topic or question you want students to address. For example, "Today, we discussed ... List as many key events/examples as you can remember. You have two minutes – go!"
- **Self-Assessment**: Students receive a quiz (typically ungraded) or a checklist of ideas to determine their understanding of the subject. Concept inventories or similar tools may be used at the beginning of a semester or the chapter to help students identify misconceptions.
- **Large-Group Discussion**: Students discuss a topic in class based on a reading, video, or problem. The instructor may prepare a list of questions to facilitate the discussion.
- **Think-Pair-Share**: Instructor has students work individually on a problem or reflect on a passage. Students then compare their responses with a partner and synthesize a joint solution to share with the entire class.
- **Cooperative Groups in Class (Informal Groups, Triad Groups, etc.):** Instructor poses a question for each cooperative group while s/he circulates around the room answering questions, asking further questions, and keeping the groups on task. After allowing time for group discussion, instructor asks students to share their discussion points with the rest of the class.

- **Peer Review**: Students are asked to complete an individual homework assignment or short paper. Students upload their assignments to the Learning Management System (Blackboard Learn) for grading and share one copy with their partner. Each student then provides feedback on their partner's work and/or corrects errors.
- **Group Evaluations**: Similar to peer review, students may evaluate group presentations or documents to assess the quality of the content and delivery of information.
- **Brainstorming**: Instructor introduces a topic or problem and then asks for student input. S/he gives students some time to write down their ideas, and then record them on the board.
- **Case Studies**: Instructor uses real-life stories that describe what happened to a community, family, school, industry, or individual to prompt students to integrate their classroom knowledge with their knowledge of real-world situations, actions, and consequences.
- **Interactive Lecture**: Instructor breaks up the lecture at least once per class for an activity that lets all students work directly with the material. Students might observe and interpret features of images, interpret graphs, make calculation and estimates, etc.
- **Role Playing**: Here students are asked to "act out" a part or a position to get a better idea of the concepts and theories being discussed.
- **Jigsaw Discussion**: In this technique, a general topic is divided into smaller, interrelated pieces (e.g., a puzzle is divided into pieces). Each member of a team is assigned to read and become an expert on a different topic. After each person has become an expert on their piece of the puzzle, they teach the other team members about that puzzle piece. Finally, after each person has finished teaching, the puzzle has been reassembled, and everyone on the team knows something important about every piece of the puzzle. For more information click here.
- **Inquiry Learning**: Students use an investigative process to discover concepts for themselves. After the instructor identifies an idea or concept for mastery, a question is posed that asks students to make observations, pose hypotheses, and speculate on conclusions. Then students share their thoughts and tie the activity back to the main idea/concept.

References

- Active learning. University of California, Teaching Resources Center: http://trc.ucdavis.edu/trc/ta/tatips/activelearning.pdf
- McKeachie, W.J. (2005). How to make lectures more effective. In Teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers (11th ed.) (pp. 52-68). New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Prince, M. (2004). Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research. Journal of engineering education, 93(3), 223-231.

The table **below** details an array of practical strategies to make teaching engaging and impactful.

	Online - Synchronous	Online - Asynchronous	Face to Face (F2F)
Think-Pair-Share	Use breakout meeting rooms in **Zoom** for small group discussions.	Ask students to respond to a question in a small group, then report out to the larger class in a discussion forum on **Blackboard Learn.**	Divide the class into pairs. Give a set time fordiscussion and adjust if needed. Then, allow time for sharing using the physical whiteboard or digital tools like **Padlet**
Small Group Discussion	Build on the Think-Pair-Share strategies while using **Google Docs** for collaborative notetaking.	Build on the Think-Pair-Share strategies.Ask students to use **Flipgrid** to share content and have discussions.	Build on the Think-Pair-Share strategies. Ask groups of 3-5 students to use **Google Docs** or Padlet for collaborative notetaking.
Turn & Talk	Ask a question and let the students discuss via chat or have each studentrespond to a **Sli.do Word Cloud poll**.	Assign a **Google Slide deck** to groups of ~8 students. Write clear instructions in the first slide and give a title to each slide such as Group 1, 2 etc.	Assign partners in the classroom and have students respond to a prompt with their partner.
Partial Outlines/Slides provided for Lecture	Create a set of class notes with blanks for important information and share on **Blackboard Learn**. Encourage students to fill in the blanks during the class session.	Develop class notes with blanks for important information and share on **Blackboard Learn**. Encourage students to fill in theblanks while viewing course materials.	Provide class notes with blanks for important information and share on **Blackboard Learn**. Encourage students to fill in the blanks during class.
Pausing in Lecture	Break up your synchronous presentation by stopping for a quick activity. Ask students to respond to a prompt or complete a poll (e.g., via **Sli.do** or **Quizziz**).	In your recorded videos, insert points for students to pause and reflect or answer questions using a quiz function (see **Panopto Quiz Features**).	Pause during your lecture to ask a question, give a poll, or ask students toidentify the three things they have learned so far in the class. You can use tools such as **Padlet**, **Quizziz**, **Sli.do**.
Muddiest Point	Encourage students to identify any unclear or "muddy points." Muddiest points can be added in **Zoom** chat or on a shared screen.	Pose a question in a discussion forum on **Blackboard Learn** or submit a video chat (one tool that could work is **Flipgrid**).	Have students use post-it notes to share their muddiest point and the instructor can discuss with the class. You can also use tools such as **Padlet**, and **Sli.do**.
Visual Prompt	Offer a visual prompt and ask students to respond in real-time using **Zoom**. You can also use tools such as Mentimeter or Sli.do	Offer a visual prompt and ask students to respond with a recorded video using tools like Flipgrid.	Provide a visual prompt and use live poll technology (such as Mentimeter or Sli.do) to have students provide a response.
Entry /Exit Ticket	When a class session begins/ends, ask students to respond to a question in the chat or a poll inside **Zoom.** You can also use tools such as **Mentimeter**, **Quizziz** or **Sli.do.**	At the beginning or end of a class/module, prepare a question for students to respond to through the discussion forum on **Blackboard Learn**.	At the beginning or end of a class/ module, ask students to respond to a question using paper or virtual response and turn in to the instructor. You can also use tools such as **Padlet**, **Mentimeter**, **Quizziz** or **Sli.do.**