

Teaching in Active Learning Classrooms with Moveable Tables



Dey 205, Phillips 224, Woollen Gym 301, Genome Sciences 010, 1378

Several UNC classrooms have been outfitted with moveable tables and chairs. These designs facilitate student eye contact and collaboration. Instructors can easily access individual students and groups.

Faculty members who have taught in these classrooms report that they enjoy a closer level of interaction with students, and are better able to gauge student understanding of course concepts. Students also appreciate the ability to interact more closely with instructors and peers.

Guidelines for Success

Lesson planning

In classrooms designed for interaction, students will expect opportunities to discuss course concepts with their peers. The instructional methods you decide to use and frequency of use will be informed by your course and lesson goals. Center for Faculty Excellence staff are available to discuss ideas for adopting and implementing active learning techniques for your course that take advantage of active learning classroom features. For more information on best practices, workshops, videos, consultations, and other resources that you can use to make the most of these classrooms, visit the [Flexible Learning Spaces Initiative website](#).

Mobile furniture

One of the first things to consider in a classroom with mobile furniture is your preferences regarding the configuration of the tables. In a flexible learning space, the furniture configuration is largely up to you, but there is no standard arrangement. When you walk into class, you may need to re-configure the tables to meet your goals for the class. Students can be a big help in this process; you will simply need to clearly articulate your expectations. With a little practice, you and your students can minimize the time it takes to re-arrange the tables and chairs.

You will likely want to interact directly with students when they are working in small groups. Keeping classroom floor space clear will help you avoid trip hazards while navigating the room.

- Have students keep book bags and personal items stored underneath the tables or in the storage bays beneath each seat (not available in all flexible classrooms).
- Hanging book bags on the back of a seat may also be an option.

If your course enrollment/attendance is less than the number of seats in the classroom, unused seats can become an impediment.

- Consider consolidating seating arrangements by asking students to sit at only at a few of the available tables.

- In rooms with moveable tables, unused tables can be pushed against the walls. Check and see if the tabletops can be folded up.

Whiteboards

Your classroom may also feature additional white boards. Shared writing surfaces provide students with opportunities to visualize their understanding and to learn from one another. They can be used to facilitate a variety of easy-to-implement active learning techniques.

- Discourage students from plugging into power outlets beneath wall-mounted whiteboards.
- Establish a routine of having students erase their work at the end of class.
- Contact the ITS Classroom Hotline if you notice that there are no working dry erase markers/erasers or if the boards are dirty or broken.

Administering exams in a classroom designed to facilitate cooperative learning can be a challenge. In addition to closely monitoring student behavior during an exam,

- If you are teaching in Phillips 224 or Woollen Gym 301, the small whiteboards at each table can be used as partitions between students during exams.
- If enrollment for your course is less than the classroom's capacity, you may also be able to simply spread student seats out a little more at each table.
- Space permitting, put a student on each end of the table.
- Some instructors distribute multiple versions of an exam to reduce the possibility of cheating.

Adjusting to a flexible classroom

On the first day of class, introduce students to the classroom and how it will support your learning goals for the course. If appropriate, encourage student buy-in by letting them help you craft the policies that will govern use of the classroom. Making your expectations clear on day one and taking the time to enforce them the first week will help make class norms stick.

If the classroom does not support your instructional goals, contact your department's scheduling officer about being reassigned to another classroom.

We welcome your own suggestions for teaching in this classroom as you gain experience.

Questions about using this classroom to support your instructional goals?

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Questions about classroom technology?

If you have any problems or questions regarding the technology in the classroom, please pick up the

red phone that connects you immediately with someone at ITS Classroom Hotline. You can also access support resources or request an individual consultation at any time by visiting the website hotline.unc.edu.