



Take advantage of new classroom features

If you find yourself teaching in an updated classroom with features like mobile furniture and increased whiteboard space, you may be interested in implementing teaching techniques that work well in the space. Active and collaborative learning methods are a great way to engage your students and achieve your goals as an instructor. Here are a few easy-to-use activities that make a big impact without a lot of planning.

Ask your students to collaborate on-the-fly

Think Break: Ask an open-ended question, and then allow 20 seconds for students to think about the problem before you go on to explain. This technique encourages students to take part in the problem-solving process even when discussion isn't feasible. Students can write their own answers or discuss informally with their neighbor.

Stump Your Partner: Pause your presentation and ask each student to write a challenging question based on the material they've heard so far. Then, have them turn to their neighbor to swap questions and talk through the answers.

Think-Pair-Share: Pose a question to your students. Ask them to think or write quietly for two minutes about their answer before pairing with a neighbor to discuss. During the pair phase, circulate among your students and tap a few pairs to share with the whole group.

Pair-Share-Repeat: After asking students to pair up to discuss a prompt, have them reshuffle into new pairs to exchange perspectives and debrief on the original discussion.

Use small groups in creative ways

Fishbowl Debate: Ask students to move their chairs into groups of three. Assign roles. For example, the person on the left takes one position on a topic for debate, the person on the right takes the opposite position, and the person in the middle takes notes, decides which side is the most convincing, and provides an argument for their choice. Debrief by calling on a few groups to summarize their discussions.

Jigsaw (Group Experts): Break a large or complex question into several component questions or elements, then assign one to each of several small groups of students. Give them time to outline their responses or design a brief lesson on their part of the problem. Then remix groups with one representative from each component, who now must teach their new group.

For more information, visit: <https://cfe.unc.edu/flexible-learning-spaces-initiative/>



Lecture Reaction: Divide the class into four groups (or four types of groups in a larger class) after a lecture: questioners must ask two questions related to the material, example givers must provide applications, divergent thinkers must disagree with some points of the lecture, and agrees explain which points they agreed with or found helpful. After discussion, brief the whole class.

Whiteboards

Gallery Walk: Post a series of questions or other prompts at different "stations" around classroom walls. Have students form groups of 3-5. These groups then spend a few minutes discussing and listing responses to each question before rotating to the next station. Students can also annotate earlier groups' responses with their own questions and comments. When each group returns to the station where it started, the group synthesizes comments and makes an oral report to the whole class.

Brainstorm on the Board: Students call out concepts and terms related to a topic about to be introduced or reviewed; the instructor or a volunteer writes them on the board. Then ask students to categorize or connect the concepts. This can also be done in small groups when multiple writing surfaces are available.

Collect Questions: Have students work in groups to generate questions about a reading, lecture, or other resource, and record them on the whiteboards. Then review all questions as a class to find common themes and sources of confusion.

Charts and Diagrams: Ask students to work independently to represent a concept or statement from the course material into a non-verbal sketch, chart, or diagram. Select a few students to present their diagrams at the board and answer questions from their classmates about their interpretation of the concept.

Concept Map: Before a major assessment, have students work in small groups to create concept maps of the material to be tested, starting with the central principle and then connecting related knowledge, facts, and sources.