

Making Meaningful Choices

Allow students to choose assignments

Let students decide on topics of interest to them (e.g., for research papers)

If your goal is to get students to read a textbook chapter for content and understanding, offer something like the following for them to choose from:

- Create a PowerPoint presentation, Wordle, or poster of key concepts.
- Write a newspaper article or TV report as if it were breaking news.
- Prepare a debate, posing as politicians presenting persuasive arguments.
- Write and perform a skit.
- Construct a database of vocabulary, terms, and concepts.
- Design a virtual field trip to places where students can study topics and concepts to be learned.
- Devise an experiment to prove or disprove assertions made in the chapter.
- Create a quiz show (e.g., Jeopardy) based on the concepts.

If we can get away from saying, "Open your books to p. 37 and answer the questions at the end of the chapter," students might love the content as much as we do.

Allow students to choose how their learning is assessed

Let students devise their own rubrics for assignments (Go to <http://rubistar.4teachers.org> or <http://rcampus.com> for templates)

One instructor at a college in Australia gives her students four possible assessments (a literature review, a problem sheet, a pamphlet, an oral presentation) each worth 25% that they can submit during the semester. At the end of the term there is a compulsory exam of multiple choice questions and an optional exam with short answer questions. The compulsory exam may be worth as little as 25% of the overall grade for students who have completed three assessment tasks. Or it can be worth 50% for a student who chooses to take only the exam (with the other 50% from the short answer exam).

The ideal strategy is for students to do some of the assessments so they have passed the course by the time they come to the exam. For example, a student could have done three tasks, gotten 75% of their grade, and passed the course already. Then the student can do the 25% exam and just relax. Although a risky option, those who do nothing during the semester can count each of the exams up to 50% so they still have a chance of passing.

Let students drop their lowest score

Allow students to improve projects or correct the answers to increase their score