

Interactive Learner-Centered Instruction

CARD SWAP: A brainstorming activity in which students develop ideas in four steps:
Individuals record ideas on cards, mix them all together, and redistribute them
Individuals swap cards to try to improve the quality of the ideas in their hand of cards
Groups meet, pool their cards, and reduce them to a small number of quality ideas
Groups report on their favorite ideas.

Example: Brainstorm ways to overcome math anxiety.

CASE STUDY: Give students a story, made up or real, that requires responses, which could include

- ✚ Identifying a character who is responsible for the events in the story
- ✚ Finishing an incomplete story
- ✚ Giving advice to a character in the story

CIRCLE THE SAGE: Learners sit in groups of four. The instructor asks a question, and those who know the answer stand. Others leave their group and circle a sage (person standing), who answers the question. Learners then return to their group and share what they have learned, compare answers, and determine the best answer.

DEBATE: Individuals or teams are given one of two sides of a controversial issue to debate, and they must use course information to make their case. There may be a judge (or panel of judges) that declares a winner.

Example: Should immigration be restricted?

FRAME GAME: An activity often used for active review, in which individuals or teams compete against one another. Instructors of different sections of the same course can arrange for competitions between their respective classes.

Example: Use the Jeopardy game to review factual information from the course.

HANDUP/STANDUP: An active way to get students to pair with new partners in preparation for an activity. Each learner raises his/her hand, stands up, and finds a partner. Upon pairing, partners drop their raised hands. Directions can be given to further direct the partner-forming (e.g., "Find someone with whom you have not yet worked.").

ICEBREAKERS: Students get to know each other during the first week of class.

1. Three Truths and a Lie – In small groups, have students share three true statements about themselves and one lie. The others have to guess which one is the lie. Then they reveal which one it was.
2. Assumptions – Give students a list of categories (e.g., favorite music, married or single, etc.) and have them pair up with a stranger and guess the answers. Then share the assumptions and the true answers.
3. Find the Person Who... -- Give students a list of criteria (someone who speaks more than two languages, someone who has traveled to China, etc.) and have them search for a person who fits.
4. Introductions – Have students learn three things about one other person; introduce him/her to the class.

5. Common Ground – In groups of 3 or 4, have participants list everything they have in common. Tell them to avoid the obvious (such as, "We're all taking this course"). Have them share the commonalities.

INDEPENDENT STUDY CONTRACT: Each student identifies ten questions about the subject that he/she wants answers to, 2) activities he/she will engage in to learn the answers, and 3) the products, with deadlines, he/she will produce to demonstrate learning.

JIGSAW: A four-step collaborative learning strategy to help students master any content that can be divided into three or four sub-topics. Steps can be done in class or as homework..

Step 1) Students meet in home groups and decide which sub-topic each member will learn (or topics may be assigned by the instructor).

Step 2) Students use resources (text, handouts, or research) to become experts in their topic.

Step 3) Students meet with other "experts" in sub-topic groups and share their knowledge.

Step 4) Students return to their home groups and each "expert" teaches his/her topic to the others.

The technique can also be used to create a class project. Each member of a group is asked to complete some discrete part of an assignment; when every member has completed his/her assigned task, the pieces are joined together to form a finished project. Students in a geography class might be each assigned a country with individuals assigned to research the economy, politics, climate, or folklore. When each has completed his/her research, the group re-forms to complete a comprehensive report.

JOURNALS, EPORTFOLIOS, or BLOGS: Writing in which students record ideas throughout the semester. In free-writing, students write whatever they want; in guided writing, they respond to prompts.

Example of a guided journal prompt: "Given what you learned from taking this exam, what will you do differently on the next exam to improve your results?"

LISTENING CIRCLE: This is a technique for giving/receiving feedback in which an inner circle of learners is surrounded by an outer circle of learners. Those in the inner circle discuss a topic or perform an activity. The activity can continue either with feedback from the outer circle or with a discussion between the inner and outer circles. Variation: Inner and outer circles trade places.

MENU OF ASSIGNMENTS: Each student selects the way they would like to be assessed from a list that ideally offers options appealing to different preferred ways of learning (e.g., visual, oral presentations).

PAIR/SHARE: Two students collaborate about course content or a learning experience.

SOLO/PAIR/SQUARE/SHARE: A student writes ideas on a topic or question, and then joins another student to share and add to each other's lists. Then the two join with another pair (making a square) and continue the discussion. The four select the top answers or ideas to report out to the whole class.

PANEL: Students present (either prepared or extemporaneously) their knowledge or their opinions on a question or topic. Groups are assigned a topic to research and asked to make a short presentation before the floor is opened to questions from the audience. You might assign various roles; for example, if students are presenting research into forms of energy, you might assign various students play the parts of concerned environmentalists, transportation officials, commuters, and so forth.

PEER EDITING: Learners assist one another to prepare finely crafted, error-free written projects.

POPCORN READING: Students jump in and volunteer to read a new section of the text as soon as the previous person has stopped reading. (Reading "pops" around the room randomly.)

POSTER SESSION: Students (usually in groups) write/draw the result of their efforts on poster paper and explain them.

PROBLEM BASED LEARNING: A problem is posed so that the students discover that they need to learn some new skills and/or knowledge before they can solve it.

PROJECT: A major collaborative assignment such as publishing a magazine of student writings.

QUIZ/QUIZ/TRADE: Each student is provided with a card that has a question on it, either prepared by the students or the instructor. With cards in hand, students pair up and quiz each other. After a designated time, partners trade cards, seek a new partner, and repeat quizzing with their new cards.

RAPID REPORTING: This elicits group reports that maximize individual responsibility. Each group is assigned a letter and each group member a number. To choose random reporters for each group, the instructor draws a number to choose the first the group, then the group reporter.

ROLE CARDS: Pre-printed cards assign various functions to members of a group. The roles may be permanent or rotated, public knowledge, or known only to the student performing the role.

Example: The Leader keeps the group on task. Innovator offers suggestions that are "out of the box." The Clarifier listens for vague answers and seeks clarification. The Devil's Advocate politely challenges others to justify ideas presented. The Encourager compliments members for contributions and encourages all to contribute.

ROLE PLAY: Students take roles of various characters in a case study and act out the parts. Exercises can be simple ("What would you do if a Nazi came to your door, and you were hiding a Jewish family in the attic?") or complex (students studying ancient philosophy might recreate the trial of Socrates).

ROUND (sometimes called a whip): A quick-response method in which the facilitator presents a prompt for a very brief response, then goes around the entire group asking each student for a response (usually with the option to "pass").

SELF-ASSESSMENT: A series of questions offering students a means to gauge their strengths and weaknesses in a content area.

SENTENCE STEMS: Truncated sentences (either on an overhead, handout, or PowerPoint) that students complete in writing or in conversation with a partner.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS: Students gather to relate the course content to their common interest.

Example: Students create special interest writing groups by majors.

STIR THE CLASS: Students sit in groups of four, each with an assigned number (1-4). The instructor asks a question and group members confer on the answer. The instructor then calls a number (1-4) and says how many groups move clockwise ("Student #3 move 2 groups."). The new group member tells the new group the answer his/her previous group decided upon and discusses any differences.

THINK/WRITE: After a prompt, students are given time to think and then write a response. This is usually followed by another activity (e.g., pair/share) and gives students, especially reflective learners, time to gather their thoughts.

TRIO: A gathering of three students to perform an activity or discuss a topic or practice a skill. Student #1 and 2 may perform/discuss while student 3 watches, giving evaluative feedback, and then rotating roles.

VALUE LINE: Students line up around the room, their positions depending on responses to a question or case study. Students may move to new positions as they are swayed by competing arguments or evidence.

Example: Students stand in different corners of the room based on a scale (agree, disagree, strongly agree, strongly disagree, neutral).

VISUALIZATION: A guided learning experience that occurs in the mind of the learner. The facilitator invites the learners to relax and then with word pictures, provides them with a mental experience that helps them master content or make important discoveries.

Example: An English instructor does a progressive relaxation with her developmental writers; then she invites them to close their eyes and go with her as she takes them on an imagined tour through the major building blocks of an essay: introduction, body, and conclusion.

Source: www.oncourseworkshop.com

For more strategies and more complete explanations of these activities, go to the website and click on "Student Success Strategies"