

# Teaching Tip Series

## Embed Active Learning in your Classroom

Lectures are a common method of presenting information to students, but they can encourage passive learning rather than active engagement with the material (Gooblar, 2019). When using lectures as a way to present material, it's important to find strategies to keep your students actively engaged throughout the class session. Ensuring that your students are actively engaged and attentive has many positive effects on student learning and the overall student experience. Here are a few general tips on how to maintain student engagement during lectures:

- Try not to lecture for more than 10 minutes at a time, as evidence suggests that students begin to lose focus around this time.
- Use a variety of sources in your lectures (e.g., videos, case studies, or personal experiences).
- Ask students to provide examples from their own personal and professional experiences in order to connect with the material.
- Check in with your students to assess the extent to which active learning is occurring in the class (see the survey on the next page).
- Start incorporating active learning activities early. It can take time for students to get in the habit of active participation if they're not used to it. Similarly, don't get discouraged if it takes a while for students to open up. Be patient and don't give up!

Here are some possible activities to keep students engaged (see Cavanagh (2011) for more examples):

- *Think-pair-share*. Pose a question or case to students and have them analyze it by themselves, then pair up with another student to discuss their thoughts, then share with the whole class.
- *Concept tests*: Ask quick quiz questions to assess student learning. For example, use multiple choice questions that highlight student misconceptions about the topic area. You can embed polls in Zoom if the class is online; use Canvas, Polleverywhere (<https://www.polleverywhere.com/>), or other software to quiz students during class; or even just have students raise their hands.
- *Jigsaw activities*: Break a larger problem or activity into smaller chunks and assign students to groups, giving each group a piece of the problem to solve. Then, have students from each group share their part of the solution with the class.

### References

Cavanagh, M. (2011). Students' experiences of active engagement through cooperative learning activities in lectures. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 12(1), 23–33.

Gooblar, D. (2019, January). *Is it ever ok to lecture?* Retrieved from <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/2153-is-it-ever-ok-to-lecture?cid=VTEVPMSED1>

## Survey on Student Learning Activities in [COURSE NAME]

Please respond to each of the following.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Explaining the material to my classmates improved my understanding of it.					
Having the material explained to me by my classmates improved my understanding of it.					
I am confident in my understanding of the material presented during today's class.					
The class stimulated my interest in the course material.					
The class increased my understanding of the course material.					
I made a valuable contribution to the class today.					
I was focused during today's class.					
I worked hard during today's class.					
I had fun during today's class.					

Do you have any suggestions on how today's class could have been improved?

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