15 Tips for Making Lectures More Interactive
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Before Presentation

Background Knowledge Probe
Draft one or two open-ended questions as a Background Knowledge Probe to emphasize important information and to determine an appropriate starting point for a given lesson (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

1. Prepare a brief questionnaire to give learners at the beginning of a lecture or before introducing a new topic.

2. Use either a few open-ended questions, short answer questions or ten to twenty multiple choice questions on the content to be covered.

3. Be sure to let learners know that these are not tests or quizzes and that they will not be graded.

Application Card
Ask learners to make an Application Card that presents one possible, real-world application of a principle, theory, or procedure (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Encourage creativity instead of reliance on text-book and lecture examples. This technique will help faculty determine how well learners understand specific ideas and will encourage learners to connect the concepts with real-life and their own previous knowledge.

1. Choose a principle, generalization, theory, or procedure that learners have been exposed to through reading or lecture.

2. Give learners an index card and have them write down a possible real-world application for the concept you chose.

Interest/Knowledge/Skills Checklists
Create checklists of topics covered in your presentation. Learners rate their interest in the various topics, and assess their levels of skill or knowledge in those topics, by indicating the appropriate responses on the checklist.

Goal Ranking and Matching
Ask learners to list a few learning goals they hope to achieve through the course or lecture and to rank the relative importance of those goals. If time and interest allow, learners can also estimate the relative difficulty of achieving their learning goals. The instructor then collects learner lists and matches them against his or her own goals.

K-W-L Grid
Create a grid with three columns. In the first column, label it “know” and ask learners to fill in what they know about a given topic. In the second column, label it “want to learn” and ask learners to fill in what they want to learn. You can use the responses to these first two questions to help inform what you will focus the session on and where you might have to correct misinformation. Label the last column learned and at the end of the session ask learners to fill this in.
During Presentation

Think-Pair-Share
This activity involves posing a question to learners, asking them to take a few minutes of thinking time and then turn to a nearby learner to share their thoughts. The pair (or group) can then report back their ideas to the entire group.

Learners can write down their thoughts before pairing off and then write additional ideas with their partner or group.

To ensure learners are listening to each other, ask them to summarize their partner’s ideas when reporting back to the whole group.

Learners are using active reasoning and explanation to understand the topic they are thinking about and discussing.

A flexible technique, think-pair-share can be used at any given moment in the session.

Reciprocal Teaching
Have learners find a partner. Have the first learner pretend that the second learner just arrived to the session. Have the first learner summarize in one minute what was said in the past 20 minutes of lecture or the learner may reflect on the most important concept she just learned. The second learner can then summarize the past 20 minutes of lecture or the most important concept she learned in the second minute.

Highpoint – Lowpoint
Have learners quickly review the assigned reading. Ask them to underline or note a sentence, a couple of sentences or a paragraph with which they agree. Similarly, have them underline or note material with which they disagree. Then have learners discuss their thoughts with a partner which can then be shared to the rest of class.

This is a great activity to do with controversial readings and readings dealing with current events or history (although, it is applicable with many types of readings). This activity could be expanded by grouping learners with similar feelings about the reading and having a debate.

Focused Listing
Have learners identify a web of concepts connected to one point in a Focused Listing (Angelo & Cross, 1993). This listing can help learners focus attention on the significant aspects of one theory, person, or concept. This technique will help faculty identify what learners think are the most important points related to a given topic and can be given before, during, or after addressing the topic.

1. Identify a single concept, term, name, or principle that you expect learners to understand.
2. Have learners quickly make a list of related terms that are important for understanding that topic.
3. Give them a time limit or a limit on the number of items they should write – usually two or three minutes or five to ten items are appropriate.

Empty Outlines
To assess how well learners have learned course content, give learners a partially completed outline on a topic and have them fill in the blank spaces. This will help faculty determine how well learners have learned the important aspects of a topic and will help learners become more aware of the organization of the main points of the material.
After or at End of Presentation

**Minute Paper**
Have learners write a sentence or short paragraph about their understanding of a particular topic or an assignment. Use questions such as “What was the most important thing you learned during this session?” and/or “What important question remains unanswered?” Learners write their responses on index cards or half-sheets of scrap paper and hand them in. Faculty can quickly find out what learners see as the most significant things they are learning and what other questions they have.

**Muddiest Point**
Have learners describe the *Muddiest Point* in a lecture, discussion, or clinical experience that emphasizes integrating, synthesizing, and evaluating information (Angelo & Cross, 1993). This technique will help faculty determine which particular aspects of the content are most difficult for learners to learn.

1. Ask learner to jot down a quick response to one question: “What was the muddiest point in ________________?”

**Applications Cards**
After learners have read or heard about an important principle, generalization, theory, or procedure, hand out an index card and ask learners to write down at least one possible, real-world application for what they have just learned.

**One Sentence Summaries**
At the end of the discussion, have learners summarize the overall concepts in a one-sentence format: Who did what to/for whom, when, where, how, and why?

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Ask learners the four things they learned, one thing that they will learn more about on their own, and one thing that remains unclear.