

EIGHT ACTIVE-LEARNING EXERCISES

What is active learning? Arguably, it's anything that's more than students just passively listening to a lecture.

Why active learning? Lecturing ≠ learning.

Why *not* active learning? "Wastes time."

How do you encourage active learning? For any given day of class, "active-learning exercises" can accompany and break up lectures.

What are some examples of exercises you could consider bringing into your classroom? That's what tonight's Mellon seminar is about. Let's model and discuss up to eight specific exercises.

#1. "THINK-PAIR-SHARE"

Description: "Think-Pair-Share" proceeds as follows. (1. THINK) Students are given a question or a task and asked to begin by thinking about it on their own. Students might be required to write down their thoughts, too. (2. PAIR) Students then pair up with a partner to talk about the same question/task and their thoughts on it. Students might be required to write something down about their discussion. (3. SHARE) Finally, some or all of the pairs of partners share their best points of discussion with the entire class.

Purpose: When students are given a chance to formulate their thoughts by themselves and share those thoughts in a small group, they're more likely share their thoughts with the entire class, and those thoughts should be more refined, especially for students who might take longer to formulate their thoughts.

Variations: • "Think-Pair-Square-Share," where pairs pair up to form groups of four and discuss the question/task before sharing with the entire class • "Think-Ink-Pair-Share," where writing something down is seen as a distinct step, although it should probably be called "Think-Ink-Pair-Ink-Share" if pairs also write something down. • You can have students do the initial Think and Ink steps before class as a homework assignment. • You don't necessarily need any pairs to share with the entire class every time you do a "Think-Pair-Share," so "Think-Pair" could be another variation. • "Think-Pair-Tweet [i.e., write a tweet]" and "Think-Pair-Text [i.e., write a text message]" are variations mentioned by the handbook *Collaborate Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. "Think-Pair-Click [i.e., click on your clicker if you're using clickers]" would be a similar variation. (Just "Tweet," "Text" or "Click" without any "Think" could be seen as variations, too, perhaps...)

THINK-PAIR-SHARE ACTIVITY

(1. **THINK**) What is an example of an active-learning classroom activity that you've had your students do for a previous course or that you might have students do for a future course? Take a minute to think about this question and then write your answer in the space below.

(2. **PAIR**) Pair up with a partner and discuss your answers to question (1.). After discussing your examples of active-learning classroom activities that you've done or might do, pick out the *best example* of such an activity and be prepared to share that example with everyone else here at the seminar tonight.

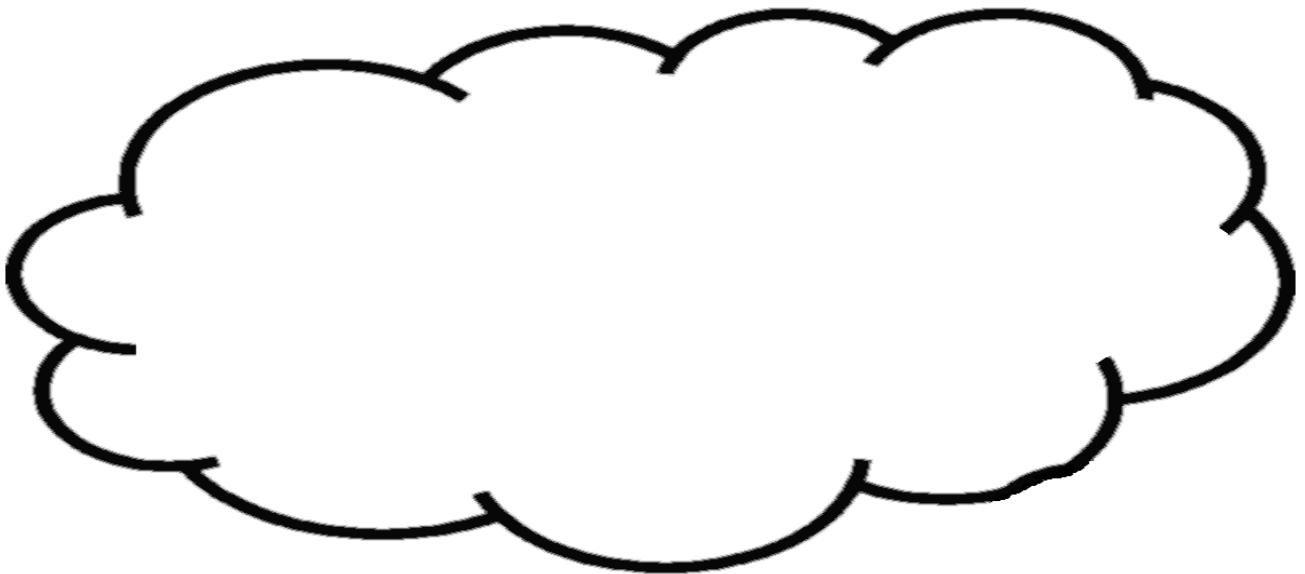
(3. **SHARE**)

#2. "BRAINSTORMING" / "COLLABORATIVE WRITING"

Description: **[TO DO]**

Purpose: **[TO DO]**

What do good active-learning classroom activities achieve? Or what do bad ones fail to achieve?



3. "DRAW IT"

Description: Students are asked to draw a picture that illustrates an idea, concept, theory, or anything else. Select students are then asked to redraw their pictures on the board while explaining their drawing to the class. The class discusses the drawings, which might be modified based on the discussion.

Purpose: Students are required to think in terms of pictures rather than words. Visual learners may be well-served by this sort of activity.

DRAW IT ACTIVITY

Draw a picture that addresses the following questions and be prepared to explain what you drew and why you drew it to everyone else here at tonight's seminar.

What is active learning?

What isn't active learning?

#4. "JIGSAW"

Description: [TO DO]

Purpose: [TO DO]

JIGSAW ON ACTIVE-LEARNING EXERCISES

(1. **FORM GROUPS:**) Form into groups of 3 people. (2. **ASSIGN READINGS:**) Each member of your group will read about a particular active-learning exercise either "#5. Fishbowl," "#6. Note Swap," or "#7. One Minute Lecture." (3. **READ:**) After you've formed a group and assigned a reading to each member of the group, each group member should read his/her assigned reading. (4. **FIND OTHERS WHO READ THE SAME THING:**) Find the members of other groups who read about the same active-learning exercise you read about. Discuss the exercise. (5. **REPORT BACK TO YOUR GROUP:**) After reading about a particular exercise and talking about it with members of other groups, you will teach the other members of you original group about that exercise. The other members of your group should gain a critical understanding of the exercise you read about.

#5. "FISHBOWL"

Description: [TO DO]

Purpose: [TO DO]

#6. "NOTE SWAP"

Description: [TO DO]

Purpose: [TO DO]

#7. "ONE-MINUTE LECTURE"

Description: At the end of class, students are asked "If you were asked to give a one minute lecture on the topic of today's class, what would you say?" Students prepare their lectures and some students can deliver them.

Purpose: Students are encouraged to reflect on the day's class, and their feedback may be helpful to the instructor.

#8. "ONE-MINUTE PAPER" / "TICKET OUT THE DOOR"

Description: At the end of class, students are asked to answer questions like "In your opinion, what was the most important thing you learned in today's class?" or "What still puzzles you about the material we covered in today's class?" Students are given some time (usually more than just one minute) to write down their answers.

Purpose: Students are encouraged to reflect on the day's class, and their feedback may be helpful to the instructor.

Variations: The questions that are asked could vary. The author of a book called *Teaching for Critical Thinking: Tools and Techniques to Help Students Question Their Assumptions* uses something he calls a "Critical Incident Questionnaire" where he gives his students five minutes to answer the following five questions: (1.) "At what moment were you most engaged as a learner?", (2.) "At what moment were you the most distanced as a learner?", (3.) "What action that anyone took in class did you find the most helpful?", (4.) "What action that anyone took in class did you find the most confusing?", (5.) "What surprised you most about the class?"