**K, W, L Chart**

K, W, L Charts are used to engage students in their learning before, during, and after a class, lesson, or unit. This activity is adaptable across subject areas and assignment types.

* Students create a chart with 3 columns and label them with K, W, and L.
* Students fill the K column with what they already know about the topic.
* Then students fill the W column with questions for what they want to know about the topic.
* After the lesson or unit, students then fill the L column with what they learned. This column can also be filled during a lesson.

Have students review the questions in the W column to be sure all have been answered.

**Think-Pair-Share**

This is a collaborative learning strategy in which students work together to solve a problem or answer a question. This simple activity can relieve the anxiety and mental block of being called on to answer a question in class. First, ask your students a meaningful, open-ended question or pose a problem, then follow these steps:

THINK: Give your students a minute to ponder the question independently.

PAIR: Invite your students to discuss their answer with a nearby peer.

SHARE: Ask pairs to summarize and share their answers with the class.

**Turn and Talk**

This can be a good discussion starter, an opportunity for all students to share ideas no matter the size of the class, and a way to build a spirit of collaboration and community in a class.

* The instructor provides a question to the class.
* Students turn to a neighbor and discuss their responses.

**One Minute Papers**

You can use this strategy at the end of class or during any topic discussion to support and reinforce student learning and engagement with class content. Simply ask your students to write a short paper in response to the following questions:

* What are the two central ideas or concepts you learned during this session?
* What question(s) remains uppermost in your mind?
* Is there anything you did not understand?

You can organize and sort your students’ short responses to help you target ideas or concepts where students might need additional help.

**Quick Write**

Quick write is a short writing activity, usually about 5 minutes, designed to accomplish one of three goals:

* Access students’ prior knowledge.
* Evaluate understanding of a homework assignment, or
* Engage students in the topic that will be covered in class.

The writing can be graded or ungraded. If the instructor chooses to grade the quick write, it should be a low-stakes value.

**Sorting Strips/Affinity Groups**

Bits of information or steps of a process are placed on strips for students to organize into ordered steps, nominal categories, or other organizational systems. Sorting Strips encourage

* discussion of competing ideas.
* collaboration among group members.
* creative problem solving for bits of information that do not have a natural order.

Students can then compare the different methods of organization used across groups.

**Paused Lecture**

Paused lecture encourages students to be engaged continuously in a lecture rather than be a passive listener. Twenty to thirty minutes into a lecture, pause to have students reflect, make notes, or answer a question. This technique fosters "active listening" skill development.

After you state an important point or define a key concept, stop, and have the students get in groups of two.

Have the pairs discuss and rework notes.

Circulate around the room during these pauses to observe discussions and answer questions.

Pausing to let material absorb has been shown to significantly increase learning when compared to lectures without the pauses. This activity can be combined with other active learning strategies such as the K, W, L chart, Think-Pair-Share, Turn and Talk, and Quick Write.

**Jigsaw**

The Jigsaw method has students learn a chunk of content that is one part of a larger unit of information. Begin by sorting students into groups and give each group content such as a textbook chapter, an article, or an online resource.

* Each group will need to divide the content into sections for each member to read and study.
* Students should try to identify the key ideas, the big idea, and determine its meaning for what they are learning.
* Students in the groups now fit their pieces together through teaching each other what they learned and then discussing it.

Optional steps

* Have students fit their pieces together on white boards, and create a gallery walk.
* Use expert groups: Have all students who learned about the same content form a group together.
* Students in expert groups discuss their understandings to deepen their learning.

**Gallery Walk**

You can use this high-energy activity to introduce a new topic or as a formative assessment of existing knowledge.

* Write questions on whiteboards or flip charts in multiple places in a room.
* Divide your students into groups and give each group to a different question.
* Invite every student to write an answer to the question and discuss their responses with each other.
* After a few minutes, ask the groups to move to the next question, read what is already there, and add any new responses they can think of, or alternatively, evaluate the existing ideas.

Continue until all questions have been visited, then convene a full-class discussion to consider the group’s collective answers.

**Four Corners**

Four Corners begins with a question prominently displayed. Four possible answers or positions are assigned to each corner of the room, and students are instructed to move to the corner that matches their response. If students agree with more than one answer, have them choose one agreeable corner. If students are not sure or do not agree with any of the responses, have them stand in the middle of the room.

* Have students discuss with their group why they chose that corner.
* To share diverse perspectives, chart paper or white boards can be used for groups to record their thinking, and then have students read other groups responses.
* If the class involves argumentation, have each group take 5 minutes to form a defense of their “position” to share with the class.

**Posters**

For this activity students are given an assignment to develop together. They write it on a white board or sheet of chart paper.

Once the posters have been completed, the posters will be displayed on the wall, and one member of the group will stay with the poster as the class circulates among the other posters, much like a conference poster session. Group members should rotate who stays with the poster, so all students can view all the posters.

This activity can be used for more interactive presentations and as a way for students to organize and synthesize larger groups of information.

**Peer Lessons**

Select several problems from related material and divide students into groups.

* Give each group one problem and have them work on the solution on a white board or flip chart paper.
* Have the group come forward and explain the problem in as much detail as they can to the class.
* Ask them to show their thought processes and methods used in finding the solution.

The instructor should add or correct anything necessary.

**Concept Mapping**

This strategy will look like a big spider web on the board when you are finished.

* Break students into groups and provide a central word or concept around which to build a map.
* Have students extend branches from the central concept that includes all subtopics from the main idea.
* Students should add additional branches that are linked.
* Students may also indicate relationships between concept map elements.

This mapping activity encourages students to see the overall picture and helps bring focus away from minute details and back to the main ideas.

**Circle of Voices**

This strategy encourages students to think about their position on a topic, and lets all students be heard at least once in the discussion.

* Begin by moving students into a large discussion circle.
* Pose a question and allow students to silently write down their thoughts/response.
* Participants go around the circle in order, sharing their responses. Each person has up to one minute of uninterrupted air time to give his or her viewpoint.
* Then students move into a free discussion with the ground rule that every comment offered must somehow refer back to a comment made by someone else.

Students may agree, question, elaborate or disagree, but must always relate to something stated by a classmate.

**Idea Line-Up**

Similar to Four Corners, a question which has a variety of answers is prominently displayed.

* Students are instructed to line up on a continuum to show how much they agree or the strength of their response to the question.
* Students should then talk to the people next to them to clarify their own thinking and to understand other perspectives.

Instructors can use this to form groups of diverse perspectives for further discussion or projects.

**Partial Outline**

In this activity, also called skeletal notes, the instructor provides students with a partially completed lesson outline prior to the lecture to keep students engaged throughout the lecture. Students fill in the gaps. This also gives students more accurate notes from which to study for exams. Partial PowerPoint slides can also be used.

**Individual + Group Quiz**

Two copies of a test are needed for this activity, but not two versions.

* Students first take the test individually.
* When all have finished, place students in groups and have them take the test again, but this time they can discuss the answers.
* Both tests are scored. If a student does better on the group test, the group and individual scores are averaged. If a student performs better on the individual attempt, the individual score is kept.

This values the student’s individual contribution to their academic performance, while also providing immediate feedback and possible correction through the group on concepts a student did not understand. This method can provide valuable insight into students’ understanding early in a term.

**Polling**

Polling activities provide opportunities for diverse perspectives to be valued and better understood and fosters deeper thinking for students.

* The instructor poses a question and has students record and display responses. If using a technology tool to facilitate the process, this should be set up before class.
* Students should then be prompted to support, explain, or defend their response or explain why other responses are not accurate.

It is important that the instructor records and acknowledges all responses in this activity. Several polling systems are available for use, or low-tech options like color cards can be used.

**Fish Bowl**

Fish Bowl capitalizes on collaborative idea creation and sharing.

* Choose a small Group of students to be the “fish” and place them in a circle in the middle of the room so that the rest of the class can form a circle or half circle around them.
* The instructor guides the discussion for the small group, while the students on the perimeter take notes on the discussion.

This method is useful to practice discourse or argumentative techniques and to apply conceptual knowledge from the class.

If the class regularly uses small groups, the small “fish” group can be made up of one person from each group. Students can also be allowed to “tap in” and replace a student in the middle to encourage all students to participate. The instructor can also choose students from the perimeter to replace someone in the middle.

**Stations**

Offering an alternative to traditional lecture, this activity engages students by requiring them to move around the room and interact with learning materials as they examine, question, exchange ideas with peers, and respond to prompts.

Set out various stations around the room (quotes, problems, multi-media presentations, charts, photos, specimens, etc).

Student groups will move among stations and complete a provided, instructor-made worksheet that gives directions and questions about each station.