Active Learning in a Socially Distanced Classroom

Active learning, which helps students engage with course content, will be especially important in a socially-distanced (also referred to as physically-distanced) classroom. There are a variety of active learning strategies that can be implemented without any modification, but some active learning strategies will require modification and creative thinking to make it work in socially-distanced classroom configurations. Below, you'll see that we've taken five traditional active learning techniques and provided recommendations to help you modify them so that students can still engage while adhering to safety recommendations.

01   THINK-PAIR-SHARE:

Begin by presenting students with a problem and allow them time to think about the solution, jot down ideas or work the problem. Then, have students get into pairs to consider the problem together. Finally, have students share their solutions with the class.

- To avoid traffic flow issues or cross-contamination of surfaces, have students pair with the person closest to them so that they do not have to move seats.
- In alternating pairs, ask half the pairs to use text messaging or messaging apps to communicate. This cuts down on noise and allows the other half of the pairs to better hear one another while still 6 feet apart.
- When you repeat the exercise with a new problem, maintain the same pairings but switch which students are messaging and which are talking.
- <u>For a hybrid or hyflex class:</u> Pair in-class students with one another and use Zoom breakout rooms for students participating online. Alternatively, to help in-class and online students get to know one another, have all students join via Zoom and use breakout rooms to pair one in-class student with one online student. In this case, all students will need to mute their microphones to cut down on feedback and students should only use the Zoom chat feature to work with their partner.

02   GALLERY WALK

Post a series of question on several posters around the room and invite students walk around and add their ideas on the posters

- Assign students different questions to start with and have them write their responses on post it notes.
- Ask students assigned to different questions to get up and add their post it note to a poster so that students aren't approaching the same poster at the same time.
- Then, have those students tackle a different question as another group posts their answers until all students have responded to all questions.
- Once all students have added their ideas, have them get up again in small groups to view each others' responses.
- <u>For a hybrid or hyflex class:</u> Use a Google doc divided into columns or Google sheets with a question at the top of each column and allow students to add their responses to those columns.

03 FISH BOWL

A group of students form a circle in the middle of the room and discuss a topic. The remaining students listen and observe the dialogue.

- Ask 4 students to stand next to their desk to represent those in the fishbowl
- Use <u>microphone technology</u> to amplify the voices of those in the fish bowl.
- <u>For a hybrid or hyflex class:</u> Ask 4 students participating virtually to serve as the "fish" in the fishbowl. After observing the dialogue, have the other virtual students as well as face-to-face students respond by asking questions via the Zoom chat window.

04 TEAM PAIR SOLO

Students begin working on a task or problem in a small group. The group then splits into pairs, and eventually the students work individually.

- Assign students to permanent teams that will consistently work together during group work time.
- Create a seating chart that has students in the same group sitting with one another
- Because it can be difficult for groups to hear one another, have students work on the problem using an application like Google docs or Microsoft teamsHave students stay in the same configuration throughout the process even as they work in pairs and then solo.
- <u>For a hybrid or hyflex class:</u> Use breakout rooms in Zoom to break online students into teams and pairs.
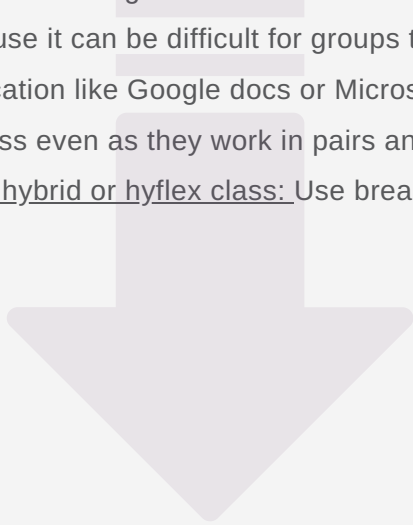
References

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Interactive Techniques. University of Central Florida Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. Retrieved from http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign Assessment/content/101_Tips.pdf

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05 SEND-A-PROBLEM

In teams, students participate in a series of problem-solving rounds and then evaluate alternative solutions offered by the different groups.

- Prior to class, designate and mark off areas where the groups will meet, making sure that there is at least six (6) feet between each student in each group and significant space between each group to reduce the possibility of groups disturbing one another.
- To reduce the number of physical interactions that students might have with one another, students will work together on their problem using a shared application tool like Google docs or Microsoft teams. Additionally, they can designate one individual within the group to explain their solution if called upon to do so.
- Each group electronically sends their solution to the instructor who presents all solutions. Teams review and discuss the solutions developed by their peers, evaluate the answers, and develop a final solution.
- <u>For a hybrid or hyflex class:</u> Use Zoom breakout rooms to break online students into teams. Alternatively, create teams with both face-to-face and virtual students by having face-to-face students also participate via Zoom breakout rooms and use their headphones to cut down on audio feedback.

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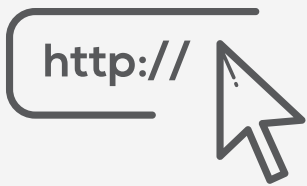
You can find more teaching and learning resources for the socially-distanced classroom on teaching.utk.edu.

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