

# Interactive Learning Strategies†

## Lecture

**Interactive.** Provide students with a general outline to give them a framework for thinking about a subject and to structure their notetaking. This type of lecture involves students by focusing their attention on key words and phrases that they fill in on a handout. It emphasizes information transfer at the knowledge, recall, and comprehension levels of learning.

**Lecturette.** Give a short (10- to 20-minute) presentation, or a number of 3–5 minute presentations followed by a variety of other learning activities. Like the interactive lecture, the lecturette can use a general outline, word pictures, or other graphics in a handout.

**Lecturette with Listening Team.** Give a lecturette or invite a guest to speak for 10–20-minutes. Assign students to small groups of 3–5. Give each group a listening assignment to generate questions about one aspect of the presentation. After the lecturette, give the groups 5 minutes to organize and prioritize and then ask their questions.

**Lecture Delay and Summary.** Ask students to listen to a 10–15 minute lecture, but not to take any notes. Give the students 5–10 minutes to summarize key points, draw diagrams, and write down as much detail as appropriate. Then ask students then swap notes and check for accuracy and comprehensiveness.

**Adversarial Lecture.** Invite two speakers to discuss their different points of view on a "hot" topic in front of the class. Give a lecturette with comments about each side. Ask students to question both speakers (and you) about why he/she made certain comments.

## Paraphrases

The instructor asks students to tell the class, in their own words, what the instructor or another student just said. Give students two to three minutes to write a response. Give students time to respond verbally, to question each other, and to clarify their own responses. This technique can be used several times throughout the class.

## Handouts

Use special documents, reports, pictures, etc. as a catalyst for discussion. Introduce each item with key questions to direct the students' attention. Students answer the questions before class and then discuss their answers during class.

## Student-generated Questions

Explain the intellectual levels of questioning (recall, understanding, application, analysis and evaluation) and ask students to write a series of questions about the topic under discussion. Then ask students to answer the questions in pairs, groups, or the whole class.

## Question Challenge

Give the class a reading assignment and ask each student to write two questions that require responses of factual information, or concise answers. Ask students to share their questions with the class and ask the class to answer the question. Ask the class if they are satisfied with the answer.

## Quizzicals

After a presentation, students working in pairs ask questions of each other that focus on the presentations. These questions are based on learning performance objectives provided to the students at the beginning of the presentation.

## Active Review

The instructor summarizes the lecture, then asks students to review the structure within the total framework of the class. Students read through their notes for 2–3 minutes to identify areas of confusion. They then ask questions of each other in pairs or small groups.

## Progress Quizzes

Short, ungraded self-tests for which answers serve as a feedback mechanism for you and your students. Students receive quick feedback so that he/she can check progress toward mastering content or skills. You obtain feedback on student comprehension and development.

## **Pyramids**

Given a problem, students first work alone, then in pairs and finally in quads (maximum). In the latter stages, they compare, refine, and revise their conclusions and recommendations.

## **Group Work Exercise**

Divide students into small groups (3–5 students) to work, within a determined time limit and without a leader, to answer a question or solve a problem and come to some kind of conclusion. Print directions and expectations in a handout, on an overhead transparency, or write them on the board. Ask each group to report their results/conclusions of the short discussion to the class. You may also choose to ask all students to write a short paper about their discussion.

## **Written Scenario**

Provide students with a brief (1–2 paragraph) description of a real or fabricated situation. Divide students into small groups to analyze the topic in stages. Ask students to select a recorder to present their group's analysis after a set amount of time. You may choose to provide all data or only part of the data. If the latter, you will be asking students to make assumptions that will affect the final outcome or recommendations. The same technique could be used with a visual scenario (still or motion).

## **Simulation**

Present cases, problems, or scenarios in which the members of the class must role-play. The group discusses and analyzes a critical situation and then makes decisions about how to resolve the situation. This technique helps students to develop team-building skills. The "in-basket" strategy is a one-person simulation where a student responds to letters, memos, or telephone calls taken from real-life situations.

## **Debate**

An organized and civil argument that requires a good moderator and a set of ground rules. After the debate, students ask questions. The debate can be conducted by a combination of two of the following: the instructor, an invited guest, student(s).

## **Symposium/Panel Discussion**

One group of 4–6 students sits at a table in front of the class. Each makes a 5-10 minute presentations on different aspects of the same subject. The class then asks questions of the panel with the instructor acting as moderator. Each student writes a short report on his/her part of the topic.

## **Crossfire Panel**

A closely moderated, heated, and argumentative discussion on a predetermined controversial issue. The topic is given to four or five student panelists prior to the class so that they can prepare background material. Students ask questions. At the end of the exercise, students are polled and the results are given to the panel for their summary comments.

## **Learning Cells**

Divide students into pairs to work on a specific in-class reading assignment, or their choice of a variety of assignments. Each student prepares a series of questions derived from the reading and take turns asking and answering the questions. The instructor collects and reviews the questions after class.

## **Quiet Question**

During the last 5 minutes of class, the instructor asks students to complete the sentence: "A question I still have about [*topic of lecture*], but have hesitated to ask is..." The instructor responds to the questions (or the most common questions) at the beginning of the next class.

## **One-Minute Feedback**

During the last few minutes of class, ask students to respond to one of the following types of questions. Review student feedback after class and respond to it in the next class session.

- What was the "muddiest" point of today's class?
- What were the two most important points you learned today?

† adapted from Cyr, Thomas E., 1994, *Essential Skills for College Teaching : An Instructional Systems Approach*, 3rd ed. Center for Educational Development, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces.