

101 Tips to Liven Up the Lecture Using Active Learning Strategies!

The following tips and tools are a collection of ideas to Liven Up the Lecture Using Active Learning Strategies. These ideas help establish a positive classroom climate, build a classroom community, establish expectations and guidelines for performance, engage students in active learning, provide feedback on student performance, and assess learning outcomes. Many of these strategies are well known among college teachers. Some are originals offered during workshops. All are valuable tips and tools for setting teachers and students up for success in the classroom!

Liven Up the Lecture

1. Know your subject - wallow in it!
2. Know your students, their interests and experiences.
3. Learn student's names.
4. Create energy, move around, vary vocal inflections, be animated, show enthusiasm.
5. Incorporate videos, music or other media to give variety.
6. Use short-term case studies for reactions and discussions.
7. Put questions or quotations on the board before each class. The question or quotation should be a guide to the day's lecture.
8. Break the lecture into meaningful units of approximately 10 minutes and summarize after each segment.
9. Establish a collection of cartoons and use them to make a point.
10. On Monday's discuss weekend activities that relate to class.
11. Incorporate current events; update lectures!
12. Include humorous stories and anecdotes to give the topic life.
13. Apply information to real-life.
14. Use a bit of drama.
15. Tell or read a story that offers an analogy for course content
16. Create metaphors for key concepts.
17. Always do a "warm-up" at the beginning of class. This exercise should involve everybody in an active way, so that they feel engaged in the class.
18. Color Code. Designate a color for each topic and print assignments/handouts on that color of paper. This alerts students to an important piece of paper in their notebooks and helps you give each class the correct assignment.
19. Have students move around the classroom with different activities. Ask students to "line-up" by experience or go to corners based on some division of content.
20. Ask students to stand up and make a values continuum based on issues related to the lecture and readings.
21. Deliver a lecture from someone else's perspective, maybe even dress in character.
22. From time to time, videotape yourself as you lecture and see yourself as others see you.
23. Have a colleague you respect and trust critique your video.
24. Show up early to class and stand in the hallway with your students. Get to know them. Use their interests to generate examples in class.
25. Require that students find your office sometime during the first three weeks of class. Give them an "excuse" to come to your office.
26. Arrange desk/chairs in a circle or a U-shape to encourage interaction.
27. Ask students to stand and form themselves into an inside and outside circle. Ask students to face each other to discuss a question from class. Allow a couple of minutes, then ask the inside circle to rotate so that each student has a new partner. Ask students to continue the discussion with the new partner.
28. Use PowerPoint, transparencies and handouts in your classroom. They make class more visual and interesting.
29. Don't try to be the expert on everything taught in class – ask students to be experts.
30. Create a "treasure hunt" for information related to the assignment.
31. Let students choose their own topic and presentation methods in assigning an individual research project.
32. If you want a class that is dynamic and involved, get students active early with icebreakers and opportunities to contribute to class using short presentations.

33. Consider a “walk and talk” discussion if the weather is pleasant.
34. Use music in class – start with a song that serves as a metaphor for the day’s content or have student teams create a “rap” song to summarize content learned.
35. Ask students to create visual representations of their learning – posters, multi-media presentations, videos, etc.
36. Have a “gallery walk” after students create posters on key topics from the lesson.
37. Hold three-minute “town meetings” to discuss an issue or concern.

Motivating Students to Learn

38. Have students write a one- or-two paragraph paper on “What would you do differently if you had it to do over?” At the end of class, ask students to write an answer to the question, “What part of today” class s fuzzy?”” Use the results to clarify before moving on.
39. Write the day’s objectives on the board and refer to each objective as you cover it.
40. Have students keep a “learning journal.”
41. Have students write a “subject autobiography,” detailing both positive and negative experiences they have had in dealing with the subject.
42. Group students and have each group teach part of a chapter to the rest of the class.
43. Use opinion polls and student surveys to give students a voice.
44. Encourage the formation of study groups, then give pointers on how to establish and maintain effective study groups.
45. Have students verbalize the connection between concepts and ideas, e.g., how the new topic fits with the topic just studied.
46. Play devil’s advocate to stimulate think and discussion.
47. Create an issue bin on a flip chart or chalkboard. As issues arise that are outside the direct lesson, write them on the issue bin. Answer all issue bin questions at the end of class. Or, assign students to answer issue bin questions before the next class session.
48. Bookend classroom films by asking students to post their questions before the video and then answer them after the video.
49. Invite guests to the classroom.

50. Provide service learning opportunities through internships, clinical settings, and visits to business and industry.

Maintaining Student Involvement

51. Have students role-play situations.
52. Break students up into small groups to come up with three points with which they disagree or about which they have questions.
53. Demonstrate a procedure for students, then ask, “Why did I do this procedure this way?” Students will demonstrate learning by answering your question.
54. In order to stay on task each class period and to organize and focus students, write on the board, in order, the activities that you will be doing in class. As you do each item, check it off. This allows students to follow along and stay involved in the lesson.
55. Give students a terminology list for the next unit the day of a completed unit exam, so they can use the list while they are reading the next chapter’s material.
56. Have students pair up and share what they’ve just heard, seen or learned.
57. Have students construct test items.
58. Ask open-end questions and listen to the answers.
59. Establish the practice of having students give five short oral summaries at intervals throughout the lecture. (Alert students to the fact that they may be called on at anytime to summarize them)
60. Let students teach each other.
61. At the end of class ask, “What were ‘keepers’ (ideas worth keeping) today?”
62. Have the class create a collective concept map on the board.
63. Group students and have them construct concept maps on transparencies; share them with the whole class.
64. Invite students to write questions that need attention on the board before you arrive each day.
65. Using the four-square idea or Corners (each corner of the room representing a different point of view) have students take a stand on a controversial issue and then defend the stand they have taken. Allow them to change their positions after hearing others’ arguments.
66. Create a Jeopardy Game on content as a test review.

67. Use students' competitive instincts to foster informed debates in class.

Managing Challenging Students

68. Encourage individual responsibility by assigning students to groups in which they have a specific responsibility.
69. When appropriate, lighten up and use humor, but not sarcasm.
70. Have students identify and offer solutions for disruptive, bothersome or irritating behaviors and incidents that occur in class.
71. Ask students to describe a student-centered classroom.
72. Use management by objectives; set the agenda for each class session and stick as closely as possible to it.
73. Always be open to legitimate student input.
74. Be honest and consistent with your students.
75. Confront an overt disrupter when the behavior occurs by stating clearly what you observe is happening and what you expect to happen.
76. Deal with the subtle disrupter in more subtle ways, e.g., "That line of thinking takes us away from the topic at hand; let's get back on target."
77. Model expectations through your own behavior and state your expectations in the syllabus.
78. Always go to class well prepared.
79. Expect the best from each student.
80. Show genuine concern by listening carefully to your students.

Questioning Effectively

81. Ask open-ended questions to encourage thoughtful answers.
82. Ask follow-up questions to probe further.
83. Ask a question, pause for think time, then call on a student by name.
84. After a student has answered a question, ask a second student if he/she agrees or disagrees with the answer of the first student and tell why.
85. Ask clearly phrased questions; do not change the wording when repeating the question.
86. Rather than asking, "Are there any questions?" have students generate questions for each other as oral quizzes at intervals during the lecture.
87. Don't be afraid of silence after a question; wait long enough (10 seconds) for students to formulate a thoughtful answer.

88. Teach students to recognize the various cognitive levels of questions and ask questions at the various levels.

89. Ask questions that have neither right nor wrong answers.
90. Do round robin questioning; have one student respond to another student's question, then ask a question to be answered by yet another student.
91. Use different techniques to involve all students in answering at once. (Thumbs up if you agree.)

Getting Feedback and Assessing Teaching and Learning

92. Use classroom assessment techniques (CATs) that probe for class comprehension of material presented.
93. Make feedback and interactive dialogue.
94. Have students write "legacy letters" to future students telling what to expect in taking the course, then read these letters to your next semester classes.
95. Ask a final test question, "What have you learned from this course that you can take with you?" (Let students know early in the semester that they will be answering this question at the end of the course.)
96. Don't assume that students understand something just because you lecture – observe and assess learning.
97. Offer a "magic moment" on exams allowing students one minute to look at notes, book, or test preparation guide.
98. Have students turn in papers using individual folders. You never have to handle single or lose papers and you will reduce your chances of misplacing student work.
99. Give each student a note card to fill out with a question they have about the subject being presented. Collect the cards and review the questions.
100. Give a series of small weekly quizzes. It gets students involved with the content and motivates them to read their text more.
101. After the first exam, have students complete the following sentence, "I could have done better on this exam if . . ." Many will realize the answer is "study before the night before."

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