



Teaching Tips for Active Learning

Use the term “session” to describe the class meetings rather than “lecture.”

- This will help set expectations that the class communication is not a one-way street and students are expected to actively participate.

Avoid differentiating when you are “lecturing” and when you are asking students to “engage” in active learning

- The session should just flow ---introduce the active learning by simply continuing and saying “I’d like to see a show of hands”, “Please pair up and discuss X”, “Please get into your small groups,” “Please take out your i-Pads.”

If you ask a question and there is no immediate response, WAIT; get comfortable with silence.

- Do not continue talking. If no one responds after a minute, then say something like “it’s your turn to respond.” And wait.

If a student asks a question, empower the room to answer.

- Get students comfortable helping and working with each other, and not always looking to you for everything.

If using groups...

- Put the students into groups BEFORE you give them directions. Otherwise they will be thinking about what group they are in and not listening to your directions.
- Have groups identify their leader/note taker/whatever is needed to complete what you asked, i.e.: if there will be “reporting out” determine upfront who is going to do it for each group.

Not every group needs to be heard from...

- Just enough so what you want all to understand what you wanted to get out of the activity. You can cut down on “reporting out time” by asking group spokespeople only for something that has not yet been mentioned.

Continuously read the room.

- If there is a significant amount of negativity, confusion, etc., stop the action. Ask the class if the instructions and goal of the activity are clear.

If the students complain that they do not like something, model good behavior of accepting feedback:

- Ask them what they thought they were supposed to get out of the active learning and why they didn’t. If they say they don’t know, that tells you that you need to frame the activity better.

If you try something and it does not work, don’t give up.

- Think about why it did not work with your students in your environment, and decide if it can be tweaked or if you need to find a different active learning technique. The problem could be that the directions were not clear, the students were not “cognitively ready,” or something else.

HAVE FUN. Enjoy the experience of seeing learning in action!