



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Teaching Techniques: Beyond Lectures

As the dynamics of education change, so does the way students learn and respond to classroom strategies. The traditional way of teaching through lecture is no longer sufficient or effective. Today's students prefer learning through a combination of lecture and interactive teaching. However, when making instructional decisions, the question must be asked, "Are we using good instructional practices?"

What we teach and how we teach play a vital role in students' academic success. Due to large class sizes, professors often default to lecturing as the dominant teaching method (CTE, 2016). Over the years, research has shown that students lose interest or focus after 10 to 20 minutes of continuous lecture (Drummond, 2008).

What is the best instructional modality for college professors? While what instructional methodology is used is situational, research suggests that interactive techniques are frequently more effective than lecturing (DeVise, 2012). Experts suggest students' learning improves when a variety of teaching techniques are employed as opposed to when lecturing is used exclusively (Hanford, 2016). Employing several student-teacher interactive teaching techniques in the classroom increases student engagement and attentiveness. Examples of these techniques include role playing, questioning, debate, and case studies. In every classroom, the content may vary, but one thing to remember is, "Learning doesn't happen in the physical space between the instructor and the student. Learning happens in the student's mind" (DeVise, 2012, p. 1). Through interactive learning, we can help students receive new information and apply it rather than merely taking notes (Lambert, 2012).

Moving to higher education after teaching 13 years in public education was a challenge. One of the hardest adjustments was learning how to lecture. After lecturing several times, I came to the realization that lecturing wasn't appealing to me. From this realization, a question arose: "Is teaching college students foundationally different than teaching elementary students?" The answer was a resounding no! Teaching by using group work, projects, games, making posters, and creating skits and songs is just as enlightening for college students as it is for elementary students. These strategies may appear *elementary*, but when applied correctly, they yield more effective learning and student success than lectures.

- **Interactive Roll Call** – It is important for a teacher to know their students. One way to do this is to have your students respond to roll call. It is an effective tool for

gathering information about them and their interests.

- **Last Man Standing** – Ask your students questions from an assigned reading or from a review of prior class content. When students miss a question, they have to sit down. The last student left standing wins. I don't always give the winner a prize. However, occasionally I keep erasers, pencils, and Post-it® Notes on hand to give to the winner.

- **Guided Questions for Videos** – Provide a handout about a video the class is about to watch. The first question in the handout asks what they know about the topic, followed by questions that guide students' thinking while they are watching the video. After watching the video, students answer the remaining questions that determine what they learned from the video.

- **Wad'Ya Learn** – This is an activity that students play by creating paper wads with questions written on each layer of the wad. Students answer the questions after removing a part of the wad. This strategy can be adapted to any content area.

- **Jigsaw Into Fab Four** – Assign students four different articles about a specific topic, then have them get into a group. Create a placemat that consists of four sections with a huge circle in the middle. Each student writes the main ideas from the article they read, followed by discussing the articles as a group. Afterwards, students are able to determine the "theme" or most important facts about the specific topic and write it in the middle section.

- **Online Literature Circles** – Divide students into groups of four and assign a book other than the required course textbook. Each student is assigned a role for each chapter. Students create original posts and respond to each other's original posts. This is a great strategy for classes that have more than one course textbook because you can use it to supplement the course's main textbook.

- **Infomercials** – You can use this strategy in two different ways. In class, I assign groups of three to four students a topic for which they have to create an infomercial. The students have 10 to 15 minutes to write and practice the infomercial. This is a successful way to cover a lot of material in a short amount of time. Plus, students really enjoy creating the infomercials, which leads to better retention of the material. The second way to use this strategy is to assign a chapter to each student. The students have to create three to five minute infomercials that cover the most important

aspects of the assigned chapter. Students watch the infomercials in class the week before finals to review all the material learned.

- **Cave's \$25,000 Pyramid** – This strategy is based on the *\$25,000 Pyramid game show*. Create a PowerPoint with the main ideas, terms, or topics from the assigned chapter. Place one chair facing away from the Smart Board with another chair facing the Smart Board and divide the class into two teams. Each team has 60 seconds to guess the most main ideas, terms, or topics. Students cannot use their hands or complete sentences when asking questions. The team with the most points wins. Always let the students know what they need to study in order to come prepared to play the game.
- **Shower Curtain** – Draw the outline of a map on top of a solid-colored shower curtain. Then place Velcro dots on the specific areas that need to be labeled. Create corresponding index cards with the names of the locations on the map. Students take turns labeling the map. To make the labeling more engaging, set time limits to see who can label the most locations the fastest. It's amazing what you can use a shower curtain for in a classroom. I use it for mapping, vocabulary, theory/theorists, t-charts, and phases/steps/processes.
- **Stations** – Create four to five stations that cover the material from an assigned chapter. Students rotate from one station to the next every 20 minutes. Each station is different and uses various learning styles. One station may have a video clip with guiding questions; another station may have a crossword puzzle covering the vocabulary in the chapter. Another station may ask students to create a movie poster or anchor chart about the assigned topics. The last station is always me discussing what I feel are the most important ideas from the chapter.
- **Basketball** – Place a basket full of plastic balls for every four students. Students choose one ball, each with a different question, term, or phrase written on it, and have two to three minutes to research the answer. Students take turns asking each other questions. The game is over when each student has answered every question.
- **Foldables** – Use a foldable as a study guide for vocabulary terms, acronyms, and theories/theorists. There are several formats for foldables. I try to use various formats depending on the number of items/terms being taught. Generally, foldables are pieces of paper that have been folded in half with several squares on each side. On one side of the foldable are terms and the other definitions.
- **Question Board** – Students anonymously write questions from homework or from class and post it on the in-classroom question board. I take the questions down and respond to them through the online question board in Blackboard. Due to the anonymity, students are more likely to be honest when posting questions.
- **Parody** – Assign students to groups of four to

five. Each group is given a topic and 20 minutes to create a parody, followed by the students presenting the parody to the class. The parody must cover the most important details and facts relating to the topic provided.

What unique teaching techniques do you use in the classroom? Tell us in the comment section or on [Facebook!](#)

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