USC Center for Excellence in Teaching

# 15 Active-learning strategies

## WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

A collection of 15 active learning tips and techniques to try during class time in any size class for the purpose of breaking up time spent lecturing and/or making class time more student-centered. This resource applies to both face-to-face classroom courses and synchronous online course sessions.

## HOW DO I USE IT?

Whether you have flipped your class or not, you can pick and choose from this list of strategies and test out the ones that seem most appropriate or relevant to your class. For assistance, please [contact CET](http://cet.usc.edu/).

### 15 Active learning strategies

1. Try to book classrooms (not stadium lecture halls) that facilitate student movement and group work. For online courses, use breakout rooms to facilitate group work.
2. Practice “Just-In-Time” teaching by analyzing students’ online quiz results before class and starting class with a discussion of the most frequently missed question(s).
3. Reinforce activity directions with visual aids and model the desired activity.
4. Let students lead while you facilitate, monitor, motivate, and clarify by roaming around the classroom.
5. Move students in groups through different stations around the room to provide multiple, simultaneous activities and skills practice on the same theme or concept. For online courses, distribute students among breakout rooms, with each breakout room having its own unique skills practice.
6. Have students go outside for observations and data collection.
7. Make class time project- and product-driven by asking for a concrete deliverable due and/or presented by the end of class time.
8. Apply theories and course skills to suggest/find solutions to real world problems, case studies, and role-play scenarios.
9. Plan student-led discussions with clear roles and expectations for the discussion facilitators. For instructor-led discussions, plan cold-calling with warning to give students prior notice to prepare an answer.
10. Have students explain the rationale for their answer choices just as the instructor explains his/her thought process while working through a sample.
11. Open and close any guest speaker experience by requiring student-prepared questions and write-ups of key takeaways.
12. Provide opportunities for low-stakes failure so students can learn from their mistakes through ungraded practice activities.
13. Poll students for comprehension check (formative assessment) or review using electronic or physical methods for multiple choice, ranking, open answer, etc.
14. Provide forms and rubrics that help students give each other constructive feedback during peer review.
15. Incorporate reflection to allow students to express their thoughts on the purpose of the activity, and the connection between activities and course objectives.