

# Active Classroom Ideas

## Activity 1

### Think-Pair-Share

*Think - Pair - Share* is a cooperative activity in which partners privately think about a question/ an issue / a situation / an idea, etc. then discuss their responses with one another, then the class.

#### Benefits

- Involves all students actively
- Enhances oral communication and listening skills
- Increases student accountability due to think time / wait time
- Serves as a non-threatening / low risk activity
- Encourages reluctant participants
- Helps build confidence

#### When?

- Use for brainstorming
- Use as a check for understanding after pre-work
- Use to determine prior knowledge

#### What do you need?

- No materials required

#### Procedure

1. Put the students into pairs
2. Lecturer asks a question / presents an issue / describes a situation / offers an idea
3. Give students time to think to themselves
4. Partners take turns sharing
5. Partners decide on the best answer / view point / idea
6. Lecturer randomly call on partners to share with the class

## Activity 2

### Placemat

*Placemat* involves students working alone and together around a single piece of paper with the goal of reaching consensus on a topic.

#### Benefits

- Creates a visual display of learning
- Develops and fosters group-work skills – demands skills like sharing space, reserving judgement, listening, critiquing

#### When?

- After pre-reading
- Checking level of knowledge
- Problem solving (each student writes own solution and then shares)
- To come to a consensus
- To assign each student a question or individual resource gathering

#### What do you need?

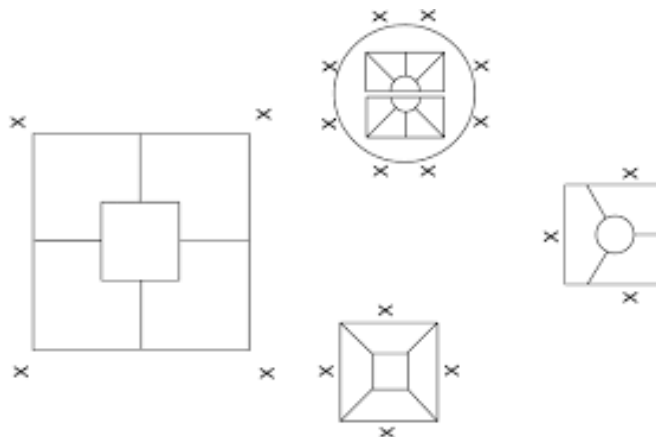
- Desks arranged to allow students to reach their section of paper
- Paper
- Model of page set-up to display or copy

#### Procedure

1. Divide paper into equal sections based on the number of group members and place a square or circle in the centre of the paper
2. Each member writes his/her ideas in an assigned section of the placemat
3. The groups' central idea (consensus) is written in the centre circle or square after the group has shared ideas

#### Layout options

The image below shows a variety of possible schemas for your placemat diagram



## Activity 3

### Four Corners

Students individually consider an issue and move to an area (corner) of the room where they join others who share their attitude or preference. This is useful as a precursor to a debate or critique.

#### Benefits

- Encourages creative and evaluative thinking
- Useful for beginning a debate
- Involves participation of all students
- Requires oral expression
- Stimulates discussion
- Provides physical movement
- Encourages appreciation of another point of view

#### When?

- Before a discussion or debate
- At beginning and end of a unit to see any shifts in opinion
- To attempt to address social issues that are not clearly right or wrong

#### What do you need?

- Tape
- String
- Pencil
- Signs for each corner - e.g. STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE, STRONGLY DISAGREE
- Chart paper posted in each corner (tape pencil beside paper with string)

#### Procedure

1. Begin with a statement, issue or question
2. Designate and label 4 corners of the room
3. Students think for 30 seconds (no discussion) and then move to the corner that represents their stance
4. Students pair up and share why they made that decision
5. Students sign name on piece of paper in that corner
6. Lecturer calls on one or more student to share why they chose that corner
7. Students given chance to move to a different corner if persuaded by discussion to change their mind - can cross out name and add name in new corner

## Activity 4

### Value Lines

**Value lines** is a thinking/emotions organiser. Students stand on a line which represents a spectrum of opinion or feeling on a topic.

#### Benefits

- Allows sharing of own opinion/feeling
- Pushes the **Analyse** and **Evaluate** aspects of [Bloom's revised taxonomy](#)

#### When?

- After pre-work involving reading or engaging with other content knowledge
- With discussion where opinions, feelings or values are engaged

#### What do you need?

- Masking tape if you wish to have students record where they stand

#### Procedure

1. Introduce the students to an issue for discussion
2. Provide students with information around the issue or require them to research an issue (1 & 2 can be done prior to session as a pre-class task)
3. Designate an area where the line will form, and state which end will represent which opinion
4. Have students move and stand on the line according to their personal opinions or feelings about the topic

#### Extensions/Modifications

- Move into a debate activity
- Have students record name on tape and after extension activity re-do and note any changes
- Fold the Value Line so students discuss with others who feel or think the opposite

Ideas source: Barrie Bennett & Carol Rolheiser, 2001. *Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration*.