

1. in your groups, discuss these 11 examples of how to use active learning
2. identify the activities that could enable students to achieve one of your learning outcomes

Post-it parade



- **Size:** individuals, pairs or small groups
- **Time:** 10-15 minutes
- **Activity:**
 - Students are provided with a question or prompt for which they need to generate ideas, solutions, etc.
 - Give each student a few post-its, and have them write out 1 idea per post-it.
 - Students then post the post-its on the chalkboard or wall. Depending on the question or prompt, it may be useful to have them place the post-its in areas to group them by topic, question, chronologically, etc.
- **Rationale:** This activity is a way for the instructor to get a general sense of what sort of questions, concerns or ideas the students may have. It's also a great way to generate a take-away (the list of questions, ideas, or concerns posted by the students).
- The activity can also be adapted for online learning using a discussion board or a tool such as Padlet.

Group text reading



- **Size:** small groups (2-4)
- **Time:** 1 class
- **Activity:**
 - Select a difficult text or passage. Break the large text up into 1-2 paragraph sections.
 - Break students up into groups of 2-4. Give each group of students a different section of the text/passage.
 - Give the students time (~15-20 minutes) to read through and discuss their section of the text. If possible, give students guiding questions such as: What is happening in this section? What is the important take-away point? What might be important for me to know later?
 - Bring the class back together. Each group (starting with the first part of the text) presents their section to the class.
 - As students present, the instructor should write/draw on the board, correct and add to student responses, and provide examples as needed in order to help tie the concepts together.
- **Rationale:** This activity can help the students feel like the text is more manageable. It can also model to students what they should be doing when reading a text.
- Group Text reading also provides an opportunity for students to practice their communication skills.



Case study



- **Size:** small groups of 2-4 students
- **Time:** 1 class, or a longer project
- **Activity:**
 - Provide the students with a real-world case for the students to study (e.g. a news article, account of a decision or procedure, video, etc.). Alternatively, have students find their own case to examine.
 - Individually, or in small groups, have students analyse the case using guidelines and a framework provided by you (the instructor).
 - Have students present their analysis to the class, or require groups to turn in written answers. If presenting in class, try to facilitate discussion such that students connect the case with material in class.
 - After student analysis has been completed, ensure that the group has concretely discussed how the case study illustrates application of theoretical or background concepts from course material.
- **Rationale:** This is a great activity for students to work on the practical applications of more theoretical or abstract course material. For example, students can come up with pros and cons for two possible options or solutions to a case, utilizing two different perspectives presented in the class to attempt to solve an issue.

Turn taking



- **Size:** Entire class, or small groups (maximum 8 per group)
- **Time:** 1 class (8 questions can be addressed in a 50-minute class)
- **Activity:**
 - Ask each student to bring a couple of questions to class. These can either be questions to clarify, issues they think were left unresolved, or ideas or positions not yet considered.
 - Have the entire class arrange themselves in a circle. Alternatively, students can be in small-medium size groups.
 - One student reads a question aloud. The student to their left then has one minute of uninterrupted time to speak and give their thoughts. This person signals that they are done speaking by saying, "OK, I'm done."
 - The next person to the left goes, has one minute of uninterrupted time to speak, and signals they are done by saying, "OK I'm done." Finally, the third student to the left goes, following the same pattern.
 - After three people have had a chance to speak, the conversation is opened up to the whole group for two minutes of discussion.
 - The next student gets to ask a question, and this cycle continues.
- **Rationale:** A benefit of this activity is that it allows students to speak uninterrupted. It also allows the students to work through some of their issues, questions or concerns with the text together.





Respond, react, reply

- **Size:** small groups (2-4)
- **Time:** 1 class
- **Activity:**
 - Break students up into small groups.
 - Provide students with a prompt. The prompt can be a targeted question, written passage/text, or argument.
 - Each student then responds to the prompt on their own in writing. After each student has had a chance to write their response, have them read and share their response with the group.
 - Each student then reacts to each of the other group members' responses.
 - Then, the student replies to each of the reactions to their own response.
- **Rationale:** In creating your prompt, make sure it cannot be answered with a simple "Yes/No." Try to create questions that will generate discussion.
- Be sure clear expectations and structure are provided to the students (e.g. how long responses/reactions/replies should be, as well as the structure they should take; how this activity will be evaluated; reminders of classroom rules; etc.).
- This is also a great activity for online classrooms. If a student is delayed in responding/reacting/replying, the instructor can give "behind the scene" nudges.



Debates

- **Size:** Entire class, divided into 2 groups (if class is small enough)
- **Time:** 1 class
- **Activity:**
 - Divide class in half either by (1) asking students to seat themselves in the section representing a particular side of the debate, or (2) dividing students in half by where they already happen to be seated.
 - Assign each half of the class a position on a topic or issue. Give students approximately 15 minutes to prepare an argument for their position. After 15 minutes, have each side share their position.
 - After each side provides their "Opening Argument," each side must then prepare to respond to the opposition's argument (give students approximately 10 minutes). This part requires members of the groups to carefully listen to and reconstruct the opposition's argument.
 - After each side provides their criticisms of the opposition's position, each group then has the opportunity to respond to the criticisms (give students approximately 10 minutes for students to prepare their responses to this as well).
- **Rationale:** Above is just an outline for one way to run a debate. The success of this activity will depend on getting the right number of students involved, and giving the groups structure.





Dotmocracy

- **Size:** entire class
- **Time:** unrestricted
- **Activity:**
 - Dotmocracy is a technique for voting and recognizing levels of agreement among a group of people.
 - For example, in a group discussion, five potential strategies for dealing with a particular problem might be suggested. One way of accessing individual opinions on each of these alternatives in a non-threatening fashion is to write all of the options on large sheets of paper, and put these sheets of paper on the wall.
 - Students are then each given a certain number of sticky dots, and asked to walk around the room, thinking about each of the options and putting one or more dots on the approaches they most strongly agree with.
 - At the end of the Dotmocracy period, all participants can visually assess the opinion of the group as a whole.
 - Alternatively, students can use markers to add a checkmark or dot as their "Vote"
- **Rationale:** This is a great activity to use after brainstorming to assess the interests of the class and focus on one of the issues students highlighted in greater depth later on during the class.



Quescussion

- **Size:** entire class
- **Time:** 10-15 minutes
- **Activity:**
 - Quescussion is discussion through questions only.
 - The facilitator starts the Quescussion by asking a question related to the discussion topic, and writing it on the board.
 - Participants may only respond or add to the discussion in the form of more questions. Each question is written down on the board. This discussion model is very informal and participants should take turns shouting out questions as they think of them.
 - There are three rules: (1) Only questions are allowed. (2) If someone makes a statement everyone yells "statement!" and (3) Two other people must speak before a participant can participate again.
 - Following Quescussion, the class can then focus on one or two of the key questions raised in greater depth.
 - Alternatively, if the questions are recorded on the board, the class can vote on the question that they would like to explore further using dotmocracy (voting with dots).
- **Rationale:** This is a great activity for controversial topics. In getting students to ask questions, you're inviting them to generate a variety of thoughts about the topic without them directly stating their own views. Additionally, with each question students will likely think of answers to the proposed question.
- This activity also works well with really dense readings (this works particularly well for literature or more abstract poems).





Snowball

- **Size:** entire class
- **Time:** 30-40 minutes depending on discussion
- **Activity:**
 - Present an idea, question, or issue to students. Each student first thinks about the idea/question/issue for one minute, with the goal of generating at least three reactions, comments, answers, etc.
 - Two students then come together with their lists and try to come up with three things they agree on.
 - The pairs of students then join with another pair, and try to come up with three things they agree on. Repeat for as many iterations as desired.
 - Eventually, bring the class together as a group to hear what the students have decided are the three most important issues, questions, ideas relevant to the topic discussed.
- **Rationale:** In an international relations class, ask students "What are the key traits of a good mediator?" Most groups will identify neutrality as one of the key traits in Western cultures, providing a bridge to a discussion of differences in the role of mediators in the Middle East, where mediators' role is to take sides and support the weaker party in a dispute.



Buzz groups

- **Size:** groups of 3-6
- **Time:** unrestricted
- **Activity:**
 - Break class into small groups. Each group discusses the topic or question on their own for a few minutes to generate arguments, answers, or ideas.
 - Once time is up, have each small group share one idea, answer, or argument with the class. Record ideas on the board.
- **Rationale:** Keep in mind that the larger the group, the less opportunity each student will have to participate in their small group discussion.

Round table

- **Size:** entire class or large / small groups
- **Time:** unrestricted
- **Activity:**
 - Have the class move their chairs and / desks into a circle so that everyone can see each other.
 - The discussion facilitator poses a question. Each person, in turn around the circle, provides a comment. If a student does not wish to comment, they may "pass."
 - Repeat for a variety of questions.
- **Rationale:** This activity ensures that all students have an opportunity to speak if they wish. However, the question posed cannot be a simple yes/no, and must have several points or issues that can be raised.

