

Focus Area #4: Active Learning Strategies

<https://vimeo.com/442704561/2c789ff55f>

Hello, I'm Donna Schnupp the instructional design team manager for the Johns Hopkins School of Education. In this brief video, I will introduce you to the fourth and final focus area, incorporating *active learning strategies* into student experiences.

Active learning leverages evidence-based teaching strategies that go beyond a lecture. It gives students the opportunity to apply knowledge to authentic contexts and engage with content, classmates, and the instructor in multiple ways. This engagement leads to deeper conceptual understanding and demonstrated higher levels of student success. Employing active learning techniques allows instructors to level the playing field so that the learning environment addresses the strengths of all learners.

This continuum illustrates different kinds of active learning strategies. These strategies are not static. Each could move along the continuum. Where they fall depends on how well they're designed and the context in which they're used. Note that also many strategies overlap with one another. For example, collaboration or team-based learning can be used with a number of strategies, such as case studies project-based learning or brainstorming.

Active learning strategies move beyond passively reading or watching a video, or listening to a lecture. Engaging activities give students opportunities to actively, and often collaboratively, process and apply what they learn as they construct new knowledge in order to meet learning objectives. In addition, including varied instructional strategies in a course or a learning module can serve to foster constructivism, cognitivism, and connectivism in the digital age.

Like other focus areas, active learning addresses learner variability. By providing students with a variety of strategies, we give them opportunities to engage in different kinds of interactions. Active learning promotes learner engagement primarily through three different kinds of interactions: learner-to-learner, learner-to-content, and learner-to-instructor. Together these different interactions motivate students to learn, engage them in a variety of contexts, and provide authentic learning experiences that promote cognitive thinking.

Knowledge construction through active learning leads to an overall deeper understanding of concepts, personal growth and development, and greater success when demonstrating mastery through assessments. Coupled with content presentations or formative assessments, active learning strategies can be used to scaffold knowledge or skills, especially towards a final summative assessment.

How can you get started with designing active learning for your online course? First, ask yourself how you normally engage students in processing readings or other content presented. In other words, how do you *know* that students understand the content or have gained a new skill? If you have students read text or articles and then jump right into a quiz or test, that's an opportunity for you to come up with some creative strategies to engage them in a more active learning process. Engaging students in discussions is a good start, however, find areas in your course where you can provide students with variety, such as collaborative group discussions, concept mapping, or role playing. Keep in mind too, this focus area can easily be combined with other focus areas. For example, if you have students watch a

video or lecture, consider making that video interactive by building in stopping points or checks for understanding. Or, if you're looking to do more formative assessments, consider using a classroom assessment technique, such as the one-minute paper or muddiest point at the end of a class session.

Finally, how does active learning align to universal design for learning? Active learning aligns primarily with UDL principle, *multiple means of engagement*. However, formative assessments may also align with *multiple means of action and expression*. Coupled with interactive content presentations that have built in checks for understanding, active learning can also align to *multiple means of representation*.