

Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence

Teaching Tips



Motivating the Student

Most faculty express concerns about students not participating in class or not being prepared. There are many strategies you can use to engage students in class. Here are a few to get you started:

✓ Get them to do the reading:

1. Assign the reading at least two sessions before it will be discussed. Give students ample time to prepare and try to pique their curiosity about the reading.
2. If your class is small, have students turn in brief notes on the day's reading that they can use during exams.
3. Ask students to write a sentence to summarize the reading and then write a page or less explaining or justifying their choice.

✓ Try using small groups for processing course material:

1. Write the questions students have about material on the board. Divide the students into small teams to answer two or three of the questions and present their findings to the class.
2. Ask students to explain, pose questions, or analyze a section of the reading or lecture material for the rest of the class.
3. Ask small teams to meet early in the term in order to design and implement oral presentations introducing material to the class.



✓ Brain storming in larger groups:



1. In preparation for paper assignments ask students to brainstorm on possible topics. Write the topics on the board and refine them as a group.
2. Use a volunteer's paper or exam. Put excerpts on the overhead projector and brainstorm about its strengths, its weaknesses, and different approaches to the same topic.
3. Go over students' homework as a group. Then ask students to write a step-by-step strategy for answering similar questions when they arise.

✓ Motivating the unmotivated:

Students want to have their individual needs met, i.e., individualized instruction.

1. They want instructors who care about them - not just their test performance.
2. They want to be challenged, not belittled.
3. They like instructors who speak at their level, who can joke and take a joke, and who let them talk with and learn from other students.
4. They like clear, complete explanations and concrete examples.



For other ideas, visit these resources:

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/adults-3.htm>

<http://www.oic.id.ucsb.edu/TA/tips/part.html>

<http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/motivate.html>