

ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISES

PURPOSE	SIMPLE ACTIVITY	COMPLEX ACTIVITY
DISCUSSION	<p><i>Think-Pair-Share</i></p> <p>This tried and trusted method for engaging students asks them to collect their individual thoughts, compare them with a classmate’s thinking, and then bring insights to the whole group. It can be facilitated with relative ease in a F2F+ class. For the “think,” stage, ask students to pause and write for 1-5 minutes in response to a prompt or question (e.g., why would a reasonable person reach this conclusion and what evidence from our class refutes or supports that position?).</p> <p>There are a few ways to “pair” students up for synchronous discussion (e.g., text-chat partners, Zoom breakout rooms); it is best to provide some instruction for how to use this time (e.g., compare your ideas and identify 3 commonalities, 2 differences, and 1 question). Finally, come back together to share key ideas and questions that arose from the partner work, either by asking students to verbalize or write their contributions.</p>	<p><i>Fishbowl</i></p> <p>In a fishbowl discussion, students seated inside the “fishbowl” actively participate in a discussion by asking questions and sharing their opinions, while students sitting outside listen carefully to the ideas presented. Students take turns in these roles, so they practice being contributors and listeners in a group discussion. A fishbowl discussion makes for an excellent pre-writing activity, often unearthing questions, or ideas that students can explore more deeply in an independent assignment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Select a topic and write an open-ended prompt. 2) Ask all students in the Fishbowl to join on Zoom, whether they are in-person or remote (ideally with cameras on when possible). 3) Allow students to prepare for the discussion by writing ideas and questions in advance (5-10 min.). 4) Discuss norms and rules with the students. For instance, will you call “switch” after 10 min. or 15 min.? Are students allowed to speak a second time before everyone else has spoken once? Also provide instructions for the audience. What should they be listening for? Should they be taking notes? 5) Debrief the exercise by asking students what they learned from the discussion and how they think it went. Students can also evaluate their performances as listeners and as participants.
SURFACING KEY IDEAS FROM A TEXT	<p><i>Concrete Images</i></p> <p>Ask each student to share one concrete image/scene/event/moment from the text that stands</p>	<p><i>Peer Provocations</i></p> <p>A different pair of students, each week, are asked to develop a provocation and lead a class discussion.</p>

	<p>out. No analysis is necessary, just recollections and brief description. As each student reports, the collective images are listed on the digital board, thus providing a visual record of selected content from the text as a backdrop to the following discussion.</p> <p>Usually, the recall of concrete scenes prompts further recollections, and a flood of images flows from the students. A follow-up question is to invite the class to study the items on the board, and ask: “what themes seem to emerge from these items?”; “what connects these images?”; “is there a pattern to our recollected events?”; “what is missing?”</p> <p>This is, obviously, an inductive approach to the text. Facts precede analysis. But also, everyone gets to say something early in class and every contribution gets written down to aid our collective memory and work.</p>	<p>Before Class:</p> <p>The pair should meet with the instructor/TA as they develop their concept for the provocation. A provocation is meant to generate deep thinking before class (the provocation is sent electronically to the class a few days in advance). A provocation could include excerpts from a text and questions. The provocation is meant to be brief and spark discussion.</p> <p>During Class:</p> <p>The leading pair is expected to guide discussion and help the class explore the week’s content. The pair has autonomy to decide whether the class discussion will be a whole-group conversation, whether students will be in groups, or whether another facilitation technique (such as a debate) will be used.</p> <p>Note: The use of a provocation followed by discussion is best modeled by the instructor/TA prior to having students lead class sessions.</p>
<p>KNOWLEDGE CHECKS</p>	<p><i>Zoom Polls</i></p> <p>This is simple to do as long as your in-person students have access to a device from which to participate (make sure they do not join audio when they join the Zoom meeting). Prepare multiple choice and multiple answer questions in advance or on-the-fly. Launch a poll and give students a window of time in which to respond.</p> <p>These polls can be used predictively (e.g., what would be the best next step) or to gauge understanding at the end of a lesson.</p>	<p><i>Active Canvas Quizzes</i></p> <p>Create one or multiple quizzes in Canvas (each quiz might consist of only 1 question), in advance of class, to get students to answer the quiz questions during class time and see the results in real time. If there are grades associated with the quiz activity, make it clear to students how much these low-stakes assessments factor into their final grade. If you cannot guarantee all in-person students will have devices, ask students to divide into small groups to collaborate and post their answers as a group. You can wait to publish the quiz until you’re ready for students to take it or you can use the timed release to have them auto-publish at spaced intervals throughout the class period.</p>
<p>COLLABORATIVE CREATION</p>	<p><i>Shared OneDrive Documents/Spreadsheets/Slidedecks</i></p>	<p><i>Jigsaws</i></p> <p>For this activity, you’ll need to choose content or a topic (a</p>

Every person affiliated with VTSU has a Microsoft account affiliated with their email account, providing access to shared online documents that can be collaboratively edited.

Idea 1 – Brainstorming Slidedecks

Create a Powerpoint slidedeck and save it in your VTSU OneDrive account. Put activity instructions on the first slide and then create a slide for each breakout group, using the Breakout Room numbers as the slide headers. Add any additional details to the group slides that align with the activity. Provide a sharing link to the slide to all the students. Divide students into small groups; you can integrate your in-person and remote students if there are enough in-person devices, which is ideal for helping students feel like part of one whole class. Create Zoom breakout rooms for any group with remote students. Set a timer to know when to close the breakout rooms and call the students back. Monitor group activities by watching the activity on the slides; the instructor joins groups first that appear to be struggling by not populating their slides. For an example, [this slidedeck template](#) is designed for 10 groups creating 'Know-Don't Know-Do' Charts; you could modify it to suit your students' needs.

Idea 2 – Inkshedding on Documents

Create a Word document with a table with 3 columns, enough rows that there is 1 per student, and a prompt at the top. Save the file in your VTSU OneDrive account. Explain to students that this activity is 3 rounds and they'll be starting by each claiming a cell in the first column. Share the link to the file with all students. Instruct them to put their cursor in a blank cell and to begin typing a response to the prompt. At the end of a designated amount of time, instruct them to move down a row on the table (the person in the bottom row moves to the top), read what the previous person had written, and then expand on what they wrote in the 2nd column (next to the first person's ideas). Then do a third round, with everyone again

reading, a video, a website, a case study, a theory, etc.) that has multiple parts. Break students into a number of groups equivalent to the number of parts of the content (ideally there are 4-5 students in each group). Assign 1 separate part to all the students in each group. For example, if you're having the students read a scientific journal article, one group reads the introduction, one group reads the literature review, one group reads the methods, one group reads the results, and one group reads the discussion. Tell students that their job is to become an expert about their part and they should come to class prepared to teach their part to classmates.

During class, put students into breakout rooms based on their parts (e.g., all students who studied the same part start in a group together). Instruct the students to talk through their collective understanding and develop a single resource that summarizes and details their part. The students should all have access to this (such as a shared document or a shared infographic).

Then change up the groups so that there is 1 representative from each part in the new groups (so all parts are now present in the group). Each student is responsible for teaching their groupmates about their part.

	<p>moving down one row and typing in the 3rd column after reading the previous two entries in that row. This inkshedding document template is designed for 20 students to participate simultaneously and can be modified to suit your instructional needs.</p>	
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For other ideas, visit the [Active Learning Library](#), which allows you to filter by things like prep time, activity time, inclusive learning, and many other categories.