Small Group/Pair Work

Stump your partner

Students take a minute to create a challenging question based on the lecture content up to that point. Students pose the question to the person sitting next to them. To take this activity a step further, ask students to write down their questions and hand them in. These questions can be used to create tests or exams. They can also be reviewed to gauge student understanding.

Think-pair-share/ Write-pair-share

The instructor poses a question that demands analysis, evaluation, or synthesis. Students take a few minutes to think through an appropriate response. Students turn to a partner (or small groups) and share their responses. Take this a step further by asking students to find someone who arrived at an answer different from their own and convince their partner to change their mind. Student responses are shared within larger teams or with the entire class during a follow-up discussion.

Catch-up

Stop at a transition point in your lecture. Have students turn to a partner or work in small groups to compare notes and ask clarifying questions. After a few minutes, open the floor to a few questions.

Fishbowl Debate

Ask students to sit in groups of three. Assign roles. For example, the person on left takes one position on a topic for debate, the person on right takes the opposite position, and the person in the middle takes notes and decides which side is the most convincing and provides an argument for his or her choice. Debrief by calling on a few groups to summarize their discussions.

Case study

Create four to five case studies of similar difficulty. Have students work in groups of four or five to work through and analyze their case study. Provide 10-15 minutes (or adequate time to work through the cases). Walk around and address any questions. Call on groups randomly and ask that students share their analysis. Continue until each case study has been addressed.

Group problem solving

There are many instructional strategies that involve students working together to solve a problem, including inquiry based learning, authentic learning, and discovery learning. While they each have their own unique characteristics, they all fundamentally involve:

* Presenting students with a problem.
* Providing some structure or guidance toward solving the problem.
* Reaching a final outcome or solution.

Student group work can result in the production of:

* + wikis
  + proposals
  + reports of case studies
  + in-class or video presentations
  + posters

Here are some ways to provide feedback on group productivity throughout the process as well as on the group product.

* + Evaluate students on both their contributions to group processes as well as the final product.
  + Create a detailed explanation of what your expectations are.
  + Provide scores for individuals as well as groups.
  + Use rubrics. Consider asking students for feedback and including some of their ideas to the rubric.
  + Incorporate peer and self-assessment at various milestones. This is a good way to check in on the assignment progress as well as the group dynamics.
  + Communicate clearly to students at the beginning how you will calculate their grades.