

Helping your participants learn better

Learning styles web sites

Here are a few websites where you can go and get free online learning styles tests:

- www.berghuis.co.nz/abiator/lsi/lisiframe.html
- www.engr.ncsu.edu/learning_styles/ilsweb.html
- www.learning-styles-online.com/inventory/default.asp?ref=ga&data=learning+styles+free+test

They're fun to do, can provide a lot of "ah-ha" for many of us, and often start a conversation amongst the students, especially if you ask them to break into groups representing the various types.

You can then focus your courses with the types in your class in mind. Give them a try! — Julia Dozier

Even mandated learners like it

When a faculty member is dynamic and excited about the subject he/she is teaching, we will get excellent feedback (even on mandated trainings like safety issues, etc). — Sara Vollmer, Bismarck, ND

Food a hit

We too have found that adult students will comment on the food, air temperature, small details, and faculty dynamics on evaluations. Food is always a hit and can be done fairly economically. It goes a long way to making a student satisfied with the overall classroom experience. We have also started providing small items like highlighters, pens and other accessories. We have put our college logo on them and it serves also as an advertising piece when they take it back to their home or office. — Sara Vollmer

Sing to radio

To the thoughts of preparation for class I add one that a very wise teacher once told me... prepare your voice. He taught speech and said one of the biggest mistakes we make is not getting our voice ready each day and it tires us out. So I learned to sing along with the radio, make faces and get my vocal chords ready each day on the way to school. I'm sure the

cars that I passed wondered who I was talking to. — Joyce Brinkmeyer

Let students drop by

Yes, students come to my office. Sometimes they just stop by to say hi, but others come by to mention something they would like to see changed such as the temperature of the room or the instructor is having trouble with the equipment. I've had students ask why we haven't used an instructor before because they are great... had we been hiding them. Other students ask if we could develop a course on such and such or let their boss know to send others. It seems to make students feel like they have an option and has worked well for me. — Joyce Brinkmeyer

Try one new thing

Every time I teach, I make a point to add or try one new thing.

Sometimes it doesn't work, sometimes it does. But the "one new thing" seems to keep me interested, on edge, and keeps the material fresher. — Tom Trumpy

One-minute intermission

There is the one-minute intermission. Interrupt participants at various times in the class and ask them to write down any questions or thoughts they have about the material being covered on 3x5 cards.

Collect and respond to the cards without identifying the contributor. This allows individuals who don't want to speak up the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

This process could provide a viewpoint which hadn't been considered by you or the students. You are almost guaranteed to have someone provide a bit of comic relief, too. — Susan Grimes

Mind break exercise

Here's a great exercise that really works for sessions lasting longer than one hour, or even one-hour sessions if they are intensive.

After 20 minutes of "heavy" thinking or material, stop and do an "Outburst"

exercise. Get the class into groups of 4-6 and give them just 2 minutes to come up with as many names as possible. Possible "names": Animals that swim (not fish); Foods starting with T; Things Children are Afraid of; etc. You have the list of the 10 "right" answers and give out a little candy to the group getting the most right. Then quickly you go back to the material.

This mindless mindbreak allows the brain to refresh itself. After 20 minutes of intense material the mind gets filled up, and learners can lose concentration or just ability to process. The exercise "cleans the slate" and then they are more able to move on with your info. It takes 5 minutes or less to do. — Greg Marsello

How to ask a question

It's not easy to ask a good question. For a start, try the "5Ws and an H" approach that journalists use. Ask: what, who, when, why, where, and how. Try starting a question in your mind with one of those words, and see where you get.

- "Why do you have trouble asking questions?"
- "Where do you find asking questions is the biggest problem?"
- "What do you do when asking a question?"

Try it. — Pete O'Brien

Ask back

I think my students dread this, but if they ask a question, I will sometimes ask a question back to them. When they get the right answer to the question, I ask another and then another. In a matter of 3 - 4 questions they have answered their own question by backtracking thru the information they already know. This also helps problem solving skill activities. — Pete O'Brien

Write to yourself

At various points in the course, have your students write to themselves. They write a letter saying how they are going to use what they have learned in the course. — Fred Bayley