

Active Learning while Physical Distancing

We know you are looking for ways to make your teaching engaging. The chart below outlines common active learning strategies and corresponding approaches appropriate for online teaching in synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid approaches.

Goal	F2F Active Learning Activity	Online Synchronous	Online Asynchronous	Hybrid with Physical Distanced Classroom
Encourage active engagement	Think-pair-share	Use breakout rooms in the online video conferencing platform of your choice to simulate small group discussions. Provide specific questions or tasks for students to complete in their groups. Students may also use collaborative document tools (e.g., Google Docs) to record thoughts.	Create Canvas Discussions and assign them to specific groups of students. Provide a question or task in the Discussion, either through video or text, and ask students to respond in their small group Canvas Discussions. The group reports can then be shared to a whole-class Canvas Discussion.	Set up small groups of 3-5 students. Pose a question or task for students to address. Students can use breakout rooms in the online video conferencing platform of your choice or shared Google docs to communicate.
Encourage active engagement	Small group discussions	Use breakout rooms in the online video conferencing platform of your choice to simulate small group discussions. Students may also use collaborative document tools (e.g., Google docs) to record thoughts.	Pose a question to students, either in video or text, and ask the students to respond in a small group Canvas Discussion. The group reports can then be shared to a whole-class Canvas Discussion. In small classes, each student could be assigned to summarize a discussion over the course of the class.	Set up small groups of students. Pose a question or task for students to address. Students can use breakout rooms in the online video conferencing platform of your choice or shared Google docs to communicate.

Encourage active engagement	Turn and Talk	Use the chat or whiteboard feature in the online video conferencing platform of your choice. Ask a question and let the students reply with a brief response. Read them out loud to the whole class. Another option is to use breakout rooms for partners /small groups to discuss and then share with the class.	Assign partners and pose a question, asking students to share their ideas in a Canvas Discussion. Student pairs could also email their ideas or use another digital tool like Canvas Chat, Google chat, or other Google apps for education.	Assign partners in the classroom that can talk 6 ft apart. Alternatively, students can "talk" through Google Chat, Google Docs, or Google Slide, when distance would make the volume in the room difficult for some students to learn.
Encourage active engagement	Student-Led Presentations	Prior to the synchronous video session, provide students with a link to a shared Google Slides presentation (set so that those at UNCC can edit). Assign each student (or pair of students) a topic or reading. Then, instruct students to contribute 1 slide to the shared Google Slides presentation reviewing the highlights of the topic/text, to be presented and discussed during the session.	Option 1: Provide students with a link to a shared Google Slides presentation (set so that those at UNCC can edit) via Canvas. Assign each student (or pair of students) a topic or reading. Then, instruct students to contribute 1 slide to the shared Google Slides presentation reviewing the highlights of the topic/text. Students can also respond to the slides in a Canvas Discussion. Option 2: Share with students the FAQs on how to create online presentations with Kaltura in Canvas. Create a graded assignment, ask students to share their presentations to the discussion forum and assign each student to provide robust feedback to a certain number of their peers.	Provide students with a link to a shared Google Slides presentation (set so that those at UNCC can edit) via Canvas before the class session. Assign each student (or pair of students) a topic or reading. Then, instruct students to contribute 1 slide to the shared Google Slides presentation reviewing the highlights of the topic/text. Students will then present/discuss their slides during the class session.

Engage/ Check understanding	Polling	Use the polling feature in the online video conferencing platform of your choice, or Poll Everywhere to ask questions and show responses in real-time.	Create a Google Form, share with students via Canvas, and share out the results in a class announcement, email, or within the Canvas module.	Use Poll Everywhere or Google Forms and share results with the class. Students without a device can use colored cards to indicate their choice.
Engage students	Partial Outlines/PPTs provided for lecture	Create a set of class notes with blanks for important information and share via Canvas. This could be a Word document or a Google document set to force-copy or view-only. Encourage students to fill in the blanks during the class session.	Create a set of class notes with blanks for important information and share via Canvas. This could be a Word document or a Google document set to force-copy or view-only. When viewing the course materials, students complete and annotate the notes.	Create a set of class notes with blanks for important information and share via Canvas. This could be a Word document or a Google document set to force-copy or view-only. Encourage students to fill in the blanks during the class session.
Engage	Pausing in lecture	Break up your synchronous presentation by stopping for a quick activity, such as responding to a question in chat, completing a sentence, or completing another task like polling, etc.	In your recorded videos, insert points for students to pause and reflect on what was just said or to complete an activity such as answer questions on a Discussion Board or in a Canvas Quiz.	Pause during your lecture to ask a question, give a poll, or ask students to identify the three things they have learned so far.

Engage	Posters & gallery walk	Use shared spaces for small groups to record ideas using collaborative tools such as Google Docs, Google Slides, or Google Draw. Then view those with the whole class in a synchronous video session. Students may be responsible for presenting the ideas they compiled.	Use shared spaces for small groups to record ideas using collaborative tools such as Google Docs, Google Slides, or Google Draw. Share the Doc, Slide, or Draw on a Canvas Page, Assignment, or Discussion and ask students to review these ideas as part of the module's activities.	If regulations allow, put poster boards around the room. Dismiss one group of students to go a single poster board and record a response. When they finish and return to their seats, dismiss a second group. Continue until the entire class has been able to record responses. Review the posters with the class or save and use to start the following class session. This activity encourages movement, individual response, and can serve as an assessment of students' opinions or understanding (depending on the questions)
Engage	Fishbowl	Small groups of students or individuals can take turns discussing a prompt or question. Others can turn off their webcams, listen to those speaking, and respond through chat or on a shared Google doc. After some time discussing, these groups can switch so that those who were listening become the speakers, and vice versa.	Students can be divided into two groups: 1 group who will initially post to a Canvas Discussion and 1 group who will then respond to their peer's initial posts. The first group can type or audio-record their response to a prompt or question in a Canvas Discussion. The second group can then respond in the Canvas Discussion.	Students can be divided into two groups. The first group will verbally discuss their response to a prompt or question with one another, while the second group listens and takes notes. These groups can then be switched so that the listeners become the speakers, and vice versa.

Monitor/ assess understanding	Quickwrite	Pose a question or two at the start of a synchronous video session and allow time for students to silently write their responses. Instructor may ask for some students to share a selection of responses or summary of their responses with the whole class.	Pose a question or two in a Canvas Discussion and have students respond. Instructors may follow up by sharing a selection of responses or summary of their responses with the whole class in Canvas.	Pose a question or two and have students write a response. Students can turn these in at the end of class. Instructor may ask for some students to share a selection of responses or summary of their responses with the whole class.
Monitor/assess understanding	Muddiest point	Encourage students to identify any unclear or “muddy points”. Muddiest points can be added in the chat, contributed to a Google doc, or discussed aloud.	Encourage students to identify any unclear or “muddy points” and share via Canvas Discussion, Canvas Assignment, or Google Form.	Have students write their muddiest point on post-it notes and post them in a central location in the room. The instructor can then discuss these with the class. Have students share their muddiest point using Poll Everywhere or Google Forms.
Monitor/Assess Understanding	3-2-1 Response	Before or at the beginning of the synchronous video session, have students complete a 3-2-1 for a reading, resource, or topic they have explored. A 3-2-1 could consist of 3 concepts from the text/topic that are significant to remember, 2 concepts that are unclear, and 1 open-ended question. Student responses can be submitted via Canvas prior to the session and used to guide instruction and discussion during the synchronous session.	Assign students to complete a 3-2-1 for a reading, resource, or topic they have explored. A 3-2-1 could consist of 3 concepts from the text/topic that are significant to remember, 2 concepts that are unclear, and 1 open-ended question. Student responses can be submitted via Canvas Assignment or Canvas Discussion.	Before or at the beginning of the class session, have students complete a 3-2-1 for a reading, resource, or topic they have explored. A 3-2-1 could consist of 3 concepts from the text/topic that are significant to remember, 2 concepts that are unclear, and 1 open-ended question. Student responses can be submitted via Canvas prior to the session and used to guide instruction and discussion during class.

Reflect on learning	Four corners	Instructor poses a series of questions or statements. Students respond to each question/statement using Poll Everywhere or the polling feature in the online video conferencing platform of your choice.	The instructor poses a series of questions or statements in a Canvas Discussion, Canvas Assignment, or Google Form. Students then respond on the platform.	Students have 4 colored cards, with each color indicating a different response (e.g., Agree, Disagree, Both, Neutral). These are held up when asked a question or statement to display their response. Use Poll Everywhere to mimic this online.
Reflect on learning	What's missing?	Use the Whiteboard feature in the online video conferencing platform of your choice, Google Slides, or Powerpoint to present a list of ideas, terms, or equations. Students can respond with what is missing using chat, poll, or live discussion.	Using Google Slides or Powerpoint, present a list of ideas, terms, or equations. Students respond in the Canvas Discussion or Quiz with what is missing.	Using Google Slides or Powerpoint, present a list of ideas, terms, equation or rationale. Students must respond with what is missing. Students can respond verbally or in a Canvas Discussion.
Reflect on learning	Aha wall	Ask students to post an "aha" in the chat or on the Whiteboard in the online video conferencing platform of your choice. Use these to guide discussion or future instruction.	Ask students to post an "aha" in a Canvas Discussion and use these to guide discussion or future instruction.	Consider placing poster boards on the wall and asking students to put their ideas up using post-it notes, using social distancing directions. Students can also contribute their "aha" to a Canvas Discussion.
Strengthen understanding	Concept map	Use Google Draw or a Google Doc to have students work collaboratively in real-time to create a concept map.	Use Google Draw or a Google Doc to have students work collaboratively to add to a concept map over the course of a module.	Use Google Draw or a Google Doc to have students work collaboratively in real-time to add to the concept map.

Strengthen understanding	Visual prompt	Using the “share screen” option in the online video conferencing platform of your choice, share an image and ask students to respond. Students can respond verbally or through chat.	On a Canvas Page or Discussion, share an image and ask students to post their responses.	Share an image and ask students to respond either verbally or via Canvas Discussion.
Strengthen understanding	Entry/Exit Tickets	At the beginning or end of a class, week, or module, ask students to respond to a question in the chat or via poll in the online video conferencing platform of your choice, Poll Everywhere, or Canvas Discussion.	At the beginning or end of a class, week, or module, ask students to respond to a question in a Canvas Discussion or Canvas Quiz.	At the beginning or end of a class, week, or module, ask students to respond to a question. These can be turned in to the instructor or submitted via Canvas Assignment. Students could also use Poll Everywhere to respond.
Active engagement/ planning for future learning/ connections	Brainstorming challenge	Use the chat feature in the online video conferencing platform of your choice or Google Docs to brainstorm ideas and prompt discussion.	Use Google Docs to brainstorm ideas and review in a follow-up Canvas Discussion or Assignment.	Use Google Docs or Poll Everywhere to brainstorm and share in real-time.
Active Engagement	1 Minute Quiz	Students complete a 3-question quiz worth 3 points in the first 5 minutes of class. Questions for the quiz are given in the last 5 minutes of the previous class or via Canvas before the class session. Answers can be emailed or submitted via Canvas Quiz.	Students complete a 3-question quiz worth 3 points via Canvas Quizzes. The Canvas Quiz settings can be set so that students only have 5 minutes to complete.	Students complete a 3-question quiz worth 3 points in the first 5 minutes of class. Questions for the quiz are given in the last 5 minutes of the previous class or via Canvas before the class session. Answers can be emailed or submitted via Canvas Quiz.

References and Resources:

Need Help with Ed Tech? The tech tools and strategies presented in this document have quick and easy help guides available to get you started. Check out the [UNC Charlotte Spaces FAQs](#) for information about web conferencing tools, Canvas, Google suite, and Poll Everywhere (among others).

This document was inspired by some materials offered by Texas A&M Faculty Teaching Resources:

- [Active Learning for Online Teaching](#)
- [Getting Started with Active Learning Guide](#)

Articles:

- Inside Higher ED: [Can Active Learning Co-Exist With Physically Distanced Classrooms?](#)

Attributions:

This document was initiated by Dr. Jennifer Baumgartner, Associate Professor at Louisiana State University, with collaborative input from various groups, including members of the [LSU LTC](#), and the [POD Network](#).

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