

## Active Learning

Active learning is learning in which you engage with the material that you are studying through a variety of strategies, including: reading, listening, talking, doing, writing, and reflecting. Learners (that's you!) and their learning needs are at the centre of active learning. There are any number of classroom strategies that are used to help you to actively engage in the learning process, including group discussions, problem solving, case studies, simulations / role plays, journal writing, and structured learning groups. The benefits to participating in these activities include increasing retention and transfer of new information, increasing connections with other situations, improving critical thinking skills, and improving interpersonal communication skills – all Essential Skills for University and beyond.

### A Few Basic Principles of Active Learning

- Every One Can Learn – Humans learn throughout their lives.
- Learning Facts and Learning To Do something are two different processes.
- Active Learning is 'Hands On' – You learn by doing and applying new ideas and materials.
- Learning Involves Practise – What you do, you learn. What you do repeatedly builds mastery.
- You are likely to learn more when you learn with others than when you learn alone.
- Meaningful learning is facilitated by articulating explanations to yourself (written or verbal), and to others (peers or teachers).
- Use all Your Senses in Learning – Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic aspects support learning. Information is complex and exists in contexts that include all of these aspects.
- Learning Includes Failure – Failure leads to success as new methods are tried and mastered.
- Reflection Improves Learning – There are few instant answers. Consider your options before acting.
- Reflection Solidifies Learning – What happened? How do you want to react next time?
- *Learning* is about actively making sense of the world around you by taking in new information, comparing it to your current understanding, and negotiating meaning out of those interactions.

The four broad categories of learning strategies that you may encounter in an active learning classroom are: individual activities; paired activities; informal small groups; and cooperative student projects. When you are engaging in an active learning activity, identifying the answers to the following questions will help you clarify your learning goals and how you will interact within the structure.

- What are the learning objectives for the activity?
- Who will I be interacting with?
- When does the activity occur during the class? Beginning? Middle? End? How much time is there to spend on it? Will we work on a project outside of class?
- What preparation (reading, research, etc.) do I need to make to be able to participate fully?
- Will my/our responses be graded or not?
- Will I write down my/our answers/ideas/questions or just discuss them?
- Will I have a minute or so to reflect on the questions/answers before discussing it or will we just jump right into a discussion?
- Will individuals be called on randomly or will there be volunteers to share paired work with the whole class?
- Will I turn in the responses or not? If turned in, should I put my/our names on them?
- When I am responding to a teacher posed question, how will I know if I am correct in my understanding?

### You are in charge of Your Learning! Take Control and Be Active!

A Few References: <http://www.themedfomscu.org/media/elip/PBL14.pdf>  
<http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/five-key-principles-of-active-learning>  
<http://cse.wustl.edu/undergraduateprograms/Pages/ActiveLearning.aspx>  
<http://echo360.com/blog/flipping-classroom-%E2%80%93-student%E2%80%99s-perspective>  
<http://changelearning.ca/get-informed/understanding-human-learning/how-humans-learn-best>

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