

IDEAS AND GUIDELINES FOR GENERAL INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Note to the Instructor: Due to the diverse learning styles represented in any group, as well as research indicating the enhanced impact of interactive teaching strategies, we recommend that instructors be familiar with the following varieties of teaching strategies and utilize them at every opportunity.

Journals

Ask students to keep personal records of thoughts and feelings regarding the topics studied. This is especially useful in documenting family/home assignments, and for eliciting student reflections on the previous day's topic. Journal content is personal and should not to be graded.

Question Box

Guaranteed anonymous, the question box can be established at the onset of the unit as a device for receiving confidential student questions. To ensure anonymity, all students can be asked to write a question (with some writing "no question" on their paper). Questions received at the end of the class period should be screened prior to answering them during the appropriate lesson.

Dear Editor

A variation on "question box", this popular strategy involves posting student questions along the top of a bulletin board, leaving room below each question for other students to post a written response or recommendation. The strategy is especially good for interpersonal problems, rather than informational questions. Students should be warned ahead of time that their handwritten questions will be posted for public view.

Wait Time

After posting a question to the class, wait for 30 seconds or so before calling on a student. (Avoid using a student's name first before asking a question – it releases the other students from responsibility for responding.) During this "wait time", look at each student, perhaps encouraging or "cueing" their response.

Cueing	After a question has been posted, the instructor may need to cue or prompt students by giving a key word or hint.
Think-Pair-Share	Ask students to think quietly about a response to a question (or write out their response). Then ask them to pair up with another student and compare/discuss their responses. Finally, call on them to share their answers and ideas with the class.
Dyads and Triads	A variation on “think-pair-share”, place students in clusters of two or three students to enhance student interaction and “normative discussion”. Triads are especially useful in role playing, where one student is assigned to observe and coach the others as they practice a new skill.
Defer	When a student has either given an incorrect answer, or has asked a question which others in the class are unable to answer, defer to other students if they have an alternate answer.
Class Debate	A more formally structured form of student interaction, class debates can be anticipated for several days with extensive preparation, or can be convened spontaneously as a result of small group discussions. Teams or speakers should be designated, with guidelines for length of presentation, rebuttal, and questions and answers. In assigning teams, it is sometimes appropriate to team boys against girls, for example when exploring attitudes towards dating and sex.
Jigsaw	A popular strategy for assimilating a large amount of information in a brief time, “jigsaw” involves two steps: (1) divide students into study teams which read, review and discuss one segment of information; (2) have students reassemble into a second study team composed of one representative from each of the first teams, to share their knowledge with each other. (Example: six members of the first study team review a topic, then number off, move into a second team composed of other study teams with the same number, and share information.)

Role-play

Educational research demonstrates that the guided practicing of social skills (assertiveness, negotiation, resisting peer pressure, taking a stand, etc.) is highly correlated with a student's ability to perform these skills in a social or risk situation. At first however, students may feel awkward in performing or practicing these skills in front of their classmates.

It is suggested that instructors phase in role-playing by (1) first interacting/role-playing with students while students remain seated; (2) encouraging small group discussions and practice, perhaps in a triad including an observer who provides coaching and feedback; (3) role-play in front of the class with scripts, or with the instructor; and (4) role-play between two students in front of the class with instructor coaching.

Conscience

For students who are having difficulty role-playing, ask an additional student to stand behind each person in their role-play. The person standing behind (i.e., the conscience) can quietly coach the student in the role-play, suggesting a variety of statements, questions and/or responses for the role-playing student to utilize.

Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is a process that encourages visualization of complex subjects or problems in fundamental elements depicted by pictures and symbols and bright colors denoting relationships. This visual outline aids the brain in understanding the situation, devising potential solutions, and storing the critical components in long-term memory for future recall. Steps: (1) distribute a large sheet of paper to (groups of) students, plus colored marking pens; (2) ask students to write, draw, or otherwise depict the central topic or problem (e.g. "HIV/STDs") in the middle of the paper; (3) as the curriculum progresses, provide time for students to add lines or branches radiating out from the main concept and sub-branches, each labelled with key ideas, perceptions and/or relationships; (4) direct students to personalize their mind map with colorful details, connecting lines, doodles, illustrations, and symbols (all which help fix the concept in their mind and stimulate later recall).