

Interactive Techniques for the Online Environment

activity	synchronous	asynchronous
Picture Prompt	Show students an image with no explanation, and ask them to identify/explain it, and justify their answers. The image can be showed through either sharing your screen on Zoom or by sending a picture as a file to students (via chat). Students can share their answers in different formats (e.g., discuss verbally, share chat response, or choose a response from a polling tool).	The image can be posted in a Webcourse discussion and students can share their responses in individual posts. Discussions should be set up so that students cannot see other answers before they respond.
Updating Notes	Take a break for 2–3 minutes to allow students to compare their class notes so far with other students, fill in gaps, and develop joint questions. Use “Breakout Rooms” in Zoom to divide students in groups.	N/A
Word Cloud Guessing	Before you introduce a new concept to students, show them a word cloud on that topic, using an online generator (Wordle, Tagxedo, or Tagul) to paste a paragraph or longer of related text, and challenge students to guess what the topic was. The word cloud can be showed through either sharing your screen on Zoom or by sending it as a file to students (via chat). Students can share their answers in different formats (e.g., discuss verbally, share chat response, or choose a response from a polling tool).	The word cloud can be posted in a Webcourse discussion and students can share their responses in individual posts. Discussions should be set up so that students cannot see other answers before they respond.
Grab a Volunteer	Designate one student to monitor chat on a <i>synchronous</i> class meeting or a discussion board in <i>asynchronous</i> collaboration.	N/A
Pass the Pointer	Place a complex, intricate, or detailed image on the screen and ask for one volunteer. Have that volunteer pick a student who will explain the image. Have that student pick another one who will add additional insights. Repeat as necessary.	Apply the same activity in the online discussion board. Choose one student who will respond to the discussion first. Then, each student will choose who will respond next.

Turn My Back	Using the polling feature in Zoom, ask how many students did the reading. After they vote anonymously discuss student preparation for the class material.	N/A
Empty Outlines	N/A	At the beginning of the module, post a partially completed outline of your lecture in Webcourses and ask students to fill it in.
Discussion Row	N/A	Students can earn extra credit for responding first to a discussion or any online activity. Depending on the size of the class, extra credit can be applied only to the student who posts first or for first 3, 5, 10, etc. Alternatively, extra credit can decrease exponentially (5 points for first, 4 points for second, 3 points for third, etc.). This activity encourages students to ALWAYS be prepared and interact with the instructor's online activities.
Polar Opposites	Ask the class to examine two written-out versions of a theory (or corollary, law of nature, etc.), where one is incorrect, such as the opposite or a negation of the other. In deciding which is correct, students will have to examine the problem from all angles.	The activity can be transferred from an online class meeting into an online discussion.
Pop Culture	Infuse your lectures with examples from pop culture. Rather than citing statistics for housing construction, for instance, illustrate the same statistical concept you are teaching by inventing statistics about something relevant to students.	
Make Them Guess	Introduce a new subject by asking an intriguing question, something that few will know the answer to (but should interest all of them). Accept blind guessing for a while before giving the answer to build curiosity.	N/A
Make It Personal	Design class activities (or even essays) to address the real lives of the individual students. Instead of asking for reflections on a pre-selected topic, ask for stories from students' own experiences.	

Read Aloud	Choose a small text (500 words or fewer) and ask one student to read it aloud and ask other students to pay particular attention during this phase of lecture. A small text read orally in a lecture can focus everyone's attention.	N/A
Word of the Day	Select an important term and highlight it throughout the class session, working it into as many concepts as possible. Challenge students to do the same in their interactive activities.	
Background Knowledge Probe	Use questionnaire (multi-choice or short answer) when introducing a new topic. For a <i>synchronous</i> class, use Zoom polling feature. For an <i>asynchronous</i> use brief Concept Check (quiz) before the course module.	
Whiteboard Capture	Using the Whiteboard tool in Zoom, take photographs of the whiteboard at the end of the day and post them to Canvas (labeled by date) for easy student reference.	N/A
Bingo Balls of Doom	Every student is assigned a number; when the faculty member pulls that number from the bingo cage, that student has to answer the next question.	N/A
One-Minute Papers	Students write for one minute on a specific question (which might be generalized to "what was the most important thing you learned today?"). Best if done at the end of the class session and using the chat tool in Zoom.	N/A
Backchannel Discussion	While the instructor presents, students use digital devices to engage in a chat conversation projected alongside the instructor. Students ask questions, make comments, and share relevant resources. The instructor periodically ties the conversation into their presentation.	N/A
Muddiest Point	Students identify the most confusing point of the lecture or online module. For a <i>synchronous</i> class, students can use chat tool at the end of the class. For an <i>asynchronous</i> class, students can use discussion board at the end of the module	

Drawing for Understanding	Students illustrate an abstract concept or idea. Comparing drawings around the room can clear up misconceptions. For a <i>synchronous</i> class, students can use chat tool to attach a drawing they made using a tool of their choice. Alternatively, students can use the Whiteboard tool in Zoom. For an <i>asynchronous</i> class, students can use discussion board to embed/attach their drawing.	
Turn-Taking Reading/Explaining	Instead of the instructor reading/explaining a slide on screen, assign each slide to a different student. Adds “good” tension and raises energy.	N/A
Rotating Chair	One volunteer “takes the microphone” at a time, then calls on the next volunteer. Each subsequent speaker must summarize the previous one’s points (or, if desired, ALL the speakers thus far) before adding original ideas.	N/A
Quick Break	Designate a two minute break in the middle of the class for students to turn off their cameras and move around, with the understanding they will use them for the entire class period.	N/A
Photo Homework	Students are assigned to use a smartphone to snap a picture of something at home that captures a specific concept from the class, as assigned by the instructor.	
Board of Artwork	Post publicly the collected drawings / abstract concepts that students turned in for a previous activity and create an opportunity for discussion and debrief.	
Time Traveler	N/A	Students video themselves at the start of the semester answering questions similar to the eventual final exam, then critique it near the end of the term.
Video Selfie	N/A	Ask students to make a video of themselves performing the homework (or lab), as they will take it more seriously and be more likely to avoid mistakes.
Infographic	N/A	Students use online services (visual.ly, infogr.am) to create an infographic that combines flowchart logic and visual presentation.

“Real-World”	Have students discuss how a topic or concept relates to a real world application or product. Then have students write about this topic for homework. Variation: ask them to record their answer on a video or type their response in a discussion board.	
Tabloid Titles	Ask students to write a tabloid-style headline that would illustrate the concept currently being discussed. Share and choose the best. Can be shared <i>synchronously</i> in a chat or <i>asynchronously</i> in a discussion board.	
Bumper Stickers	Ask students to write or design a visual slogan-like bumper sticker to illustrate a particular concept from lecture. Can be shared <i>synchronously</i> in a chat or <i>asynchronously</i> in a discussion board.	
Student Storytelling	Students are given assignments that make use of a given concept in relation to something that seems personally relevant (such as requiring the topic to be someone in their family).	
Think-Pair-Share	Students use Breakout Rooms in Zoom to share and compare possible answers to a question with a partner before they share them to the class either verbally or via chat.	N/A
Peer Review Writing Task	N/A	To assist students with writing assignments, encourage them to exchange drafts with a partner. The partner reads the essay and writes a three paragraph response: the first paragraph outlines the strengths of the essay, the second paragraph discusses the essay’s problems, and the third paragraph is a description of what the partner would focus on in revision, if it were their essay.
Make It a Story	N/A	Encourage students to submit their group projects as a comic or story created online (bubblr, StripCreator, StoryJumper, or Storify)
Audio and Videotaped Protocols	N/A	Students video-record themselves while they are solving problems.
Imaginary Show and Tell	Students pretend they have brought an object relevant to current discussion, and “display” it to the class while talking about its properties. Can be done <i>synchronously</i> in a Zoom meeting or <i>asynchronously</i> by students making a video recording.	
Group Test / Group Grade	N/A	Allow students to take an exam as a team, speaking to each other during the exam and they all share the

		same grade. Students can use an online conferencing tool of their choice.
Group Test / Individual Grade	N/A	Allow students to view and discuss the test as a team, using an online conferencing tool of their choice. Then, each student fills out an individual test sheet and thus results are not necessarily the same across the entire group.
Video Demonstrations	N/A	Using a webcam, record a demonstration relevant to your topic and post it to YouTube.
Student Videos	N/A	Student projects, presentations, or speeches can take the form of video instead of PowerPoint, and be uploaded for the class to see.
Movie Clips	N/A	Show brief segments of popular movies to illustrate a point, start a conversation. Alternatively, have students find and prepare these brief segments and share with the class.
Shared Account	N/A	Instructor creates a generic YouTube username/account and gives the password to everyone in the class, so student uploads all go to the same place.
Compose a Musical Theme	N/A	Using free apps, students create their version of a “theme song” for an academic concept (recidivism, electron shells, etc.) and also justify WHY the composition includes the emotion or action it does.
Two Truths and a Lie		Students prepare two truths and a lie about the course concept. Other students need to decide which statement is a lie. Can be done <i>synchronously</i> in an online class meeting or <i>asynchronously</i> in a discussion board.
Crossword Puzzle	N/A	Create a crossword puzzle for students to review terms, definitions, or concepts before a test. Use online websites which automate the puzzle creation.

Pictionary	For important concepts and especially terms, have students play Pictionary using the Zoom Whiteboard: one draws images only, the rest must guess the term.	N/A
Find the Company	Students search the internet for a corporation that makes use of concepts/ideas from class and must defend their choice in the next class session or via discussion board.	
Questions as Homework	Students write questions before class on 3–5 cards: “What I really wanted to know about mitochondrial DNA but was afraid to ask...” Can be shared <i>synchronously</i> via chat or <i>asynchronously</i> via discussion board.	
Press Conference	Ask students to role-play as investigative reporters asking questions of you, the expert on the topic. They should seek a point of contradiction or inadequate evidence, hounding you in the process with follow-up questions to all your replies. Can be done <i>synchronously</i> in an online Zoom meeting or <i>asynchronously</i> via discussion board.	
Press Conference (Guest Speaker)	Invite a guest speaker and run the class like a press conference, with a few prepared remarks and then fielding questions from the audience.	N/A
Online Chat (Quick)	To gauge a quick response to a topic or reading assignment, post a question (in the discussion board or other chat tool), and then allow students to chat in a <i>synchronous</i> environment for the next 10 minutes on the topic. A quick examination of the chat transcript will reveal a multitude of opinions and directions for further discussion. In online environments, many students can “talk” at once, with less chaotic and more productive results than in a face-to-face environment.	N/A
Online Study Groups	N/A	Create study groups or let students join discussions on their own. Create forums for either assigned groups (i.e., by major or last name) or for specific purposes (e.g., a night-before-the-quiz study group). Inform students of these study groups and monitor the forums throughout the semester.