75 e-Learning Activities

Adopted from: Watkins, Ryan. 75 e-Learning Activities: Making Online Learning Interactive. San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2005. 978-0787975852. http://www.amazon.com/75-e-Learning-Activities-Learning-Interactive/dp/0787975850

Introductions and Icebreakers

1. **Worth a Thousand Words**
   Ask students to choose three to five pictures from the WWW that describe their interests, background, and/or experiences. Students post the pictures and a short description of each to the discussion board.

2. **Who or What Am I?**
   Make a list of well-known people or commonly used items in your subject (enough to match one to each student in the class). Break the class up into groups of eight to fifteen people and assign each group a discussion forum. Students ask each other questions to determine who or what the other students are. Once a student has a complete list, they email the professor. End the assignment when the first person from each group answers all correctly.

3. **Websites about Myself**
   Students choose three websites that they think help to describe them. Then, students post links to these sites as well as a description of why these sites describe them.

4. **Before, During, and After**
   Students post to a discussion board describing the skills/knowledge they bring to this course, what they expect to learn in the course, and how they will determine if the course has been successful. Encourage students to review their peers' posts.

5. **Likes and Dislikes**
   Students post to a discussion board three likes and three dislikes of online learning, but don't discuss them. Once 25% of the class agrees with one like or dislike, create a new discussion topic for that like or dislike where students can discuss.

6. **Find Someone Who…**
   Students email the professor an interesting characteristic, experience, or possession that other students wouldn't know about them. Email students a characteristic that is not their own. Without revealing what they are searching for, students ask questions in the discussion board to determine which student their characteristic belongs to. Once a student thinks they have the answer, they post it to the discussion board.

7. **Common Interests**
   Identify several areas where students may have common interests (e.g. My hobby is…). Create a discussion board for each topic. Encourage students to post to several areas describing their interests. Include an extra forum for interests that have not been included in the other areas.

8. **Let me introduce…**
   Assign partners. Each student creates five interview questions to ask his/her partner. After interviewing each other, the students write an introduction for their partner on the discussion board.

9. **My First Time**
   Identify five to seven possible first-time events that students in the class have already experienced (e.g., "my first time taking an online course"). A discussion topic is set up for each of the "first times". Each student is required to post under two to three topics describing their first time.
10. **Tour My Favorite Website**
    Students identify their favorite website and develop a written "tour" of the site to guide students through it. They post the tour to the discussion board and take other students' tours.
11. **Composite Biography**
    Have the class convene in a synchronous chat room. In alphabetical order (or any order you desire), each student posts an interesting fact about themselves (e.g. I was born in Massachusetts). No fact can contradict a fact before it. Post the final list of facts to an asynchronous discussion board. Students post a description of the diversity in the class.
12. **Who Are We?**
    In a synchronous chat room, students post a three-word description of themselves. Students note similarities with other students.
13. **What's My Time?**
    In a synchronous chat room, students post the city they are currently in. Other students must post what time it is there.

e-Learning Skills

14. **e-Learning Expectations**
    Open several discussion forums dedicated to a misconception of online courses (e.g., Online courses require less time that traditional courses.). Students react and respond to the misconceptions.
15. **25-15-5 Goal Development**
    Students create a 25-word personal goal statement for the course and post it to a discussion forum. The next day, students edit the statement to 15 words and post the revised statement as a reply to their original post. On the third day, students reduce the statement to five words and reply again. On the last day, students reply to their peers' statements.
16. **Learning Styles And Study Habits**
    Create a discussion forum for each VAK learning style. Students take the VAK learning styles inventory and discuss their primary learning style in the designated forum.
17. **Pre-Reading Questions**
    Prior to a reading assignment, students skim the material and identify three questions they should get answered once they read the material and post them to a discussion board. Once the students have read the assigned material, they answer the questions in another forum.
18. **e-Learning Study Skills**
    In groups of three to five, students fill out a worksheet on an online technology (e.g., listservs, online exams). Each group finishes the worksheet collaboratively using the discussion board. Each group should have a different technology.
19. **e-Learning Readiness Self-Assessment**
    Students take the e-Learning Readiness Self-Assessment (see book) and fill out the scoring and interpretation sheet (see book). On a discussion board, students discuss the implications of their results on their current and future study habits.

20. **Lessons Learned the Hard Way**
    Students identify and post to a discussion forum a "lesson learned the hard way" as a user of technology. The post should include background information/context, what happened, what they do differently, and a subject line that describes the lesson learned. Encourage students to reply to others' posts.

21. **Take Note**
    Students take notes in a word processor while reading online material. Then, students post those notes to a discussion board.

Collaboration and Team Building

22. **Group Norms**
    Establish groups of three to eight students (who will be working together on a project throughout the semester). Members of each group discuss the seven areas of developing group norms (establishing roles, timeliness, courtesy, decision-making process, workload assignment, setting priorities, enforcement of norms) in their own discussion forum. Each group will have a collaborative final post that discusses their group norms.

23. **Gaining Buy-In**
    Write two or more questions relating to the objectives of the class (e.g., All of the goals and objectives of this course are intended to prepare you for success in your work. Which three do you believe will have the most impact on your ability to be successful?). Create a discussion forum for each question and students post their responses.

24. **Setting Discussion Ground Rules**
    In a discussion forum, students suggest different ground rules for posting discussions during the semester. Encourage them to comment on other students' posts. At the end of the discussion period, post a final list of the discussion ground rules, and include comments on any changes you have made or rules that were highly debated by students.

25. **Playing Roles in a Group**
    Place students in groups of 10 to 15. Assign each student a role for the discussion (e.g., idea proposer, questioner, agreer). Assign a discussion topic for the students to participate in.

26. **Group Member Responsibilities**
    In a synchronous chat room, post the first 10 of 20 group member responsibilities (see book). Students rank each item from most (10 points) to least important (1 point). Introduce the next 10 responsibilities one at a time, and students rank them with the first 10. Once the ranking is complete, tell students which responsibilities received the most points. Ask students if there are any others that should be added to the list.

Elaborating on Course Content

27. **In the News**
    Each member of a group of five to 10 students finds a news story based on their instructor-assigned topic. Students post a two- to three-paragraph summary of the article and a link to the article in their group's discussion board. As a group, the students discuss the articles and choose one to share with the class. The group posts the summary of that article on the class forum.

28. **Revise, Revise, Revise**

Assign a paper or essay to students. Students turn in a rough draft. Review the drafts and provide feedback. Students revise the draft (including 75% new material, not just edits), focusing on limiting the scope or focus. Provide feedback for the new drafts and students revise again (including 50% new material), focusing on adding an element. Provide feedback and have students turn in the final essay/paper. Only the final draft should be graded.

29. **Evaluating Online Resources**

    In groups of three, six, or nine, students evaluate a different online resource. They evaluate the information quality, source reliability, and information utility (see book). Students post their final evaluation to a discussion board.

30. **Learner-Crafted Scavenger Hunts**

    Choose a course-related topic for the scavenger hunt. Students create their own scavenger hunt by asking questions related to the topic that can be answered using online resources. Students post their scavenger hunts to a discussion forum and complete some of their classmates' scavenger hunts. At the end of the activity, students post the answers to their scavenger hunt.

31. **My Reactions**

    Students respond to an assigned reading, stating what they agreed with, disagreed with, and found interesting. They post to the discussion board. Encourage students to review their peers' reactions.

32. **Collaborative WebQuests**

    Select a course-related topic and develop a task or assignment related to that topic (e.g., report, presentation, portfolio). In groups of three to five, students finish the task collectively. Assign a discussion forum where each team can communicate. Select a team leader for each group and someone to write the first draft of the project. The groups compile a webliography and complete the assignment. The team leader submits the final product.

33. **Annotated Webliographies**

    Students compose an annotation of five to 10 websites. It must have the following elements: the URL, date accessed, who owns/maintains the website, description of the content, its credibility/reliability, and a discussion of how the website is useful in relation to the course. In groups of eight to 15, students discuss their annotations using a discussion board. Groups identify themes among the websites and useful resources for the class via group discussion.

34. **Electronic Portfolios**

    Students compile their assignments from the course, including drafts with feedback, into a portfolio and create a cover letter. Each student should have one file with the entire portfolio. Students post their portfolio to a discussion forum. Encourage students to view each others' portfolios.

35. **Class Memoir**

    Throughout the class, students post their experiences to a class memoir forum. These can include, summaries of learning experiences, journal or log entries, weekly reviews, reflection on course discussions, or current events that have impacted course learners. Students review the class memoir forum and post a two- to three-paragraph reflection describing how their perspectives on course topics were changed throughout the course.

36. **100 Words or Less**

    Create a discussion forum for the activity. Throughout the semester, require that students post a minimum number of summaries to the forum. Students post summaries that cover assigned readings and consist of 100 words or less. Encourage students to reflect on their peers' posts.

37. **Varied Reactions**

Assign groups of five to seven students, give each student in the group a role (e.g., the informed advocate, the reporter who wrote the article, the scientist who asks lots of questions), and give each group a news article that discusses a course-related current event . Students discuss the article from the viewpoint of their role in their discussion forum. Repeat throughout the semester, varying the student roles.

38. **Dear ADDIE Letters**.
Develop a Dear ADDIE letter that requests advice with regard to a "real world" situation that requires the application of course content to resolve. Groups of three to five students discuss the problem and possible solutions using resources from the course. Each group posts their final response to a class forum so the groups can review each others' solutions.

39. **Role Reversal**
Select an activity from your online course where additional learner interactions are desired. Create groups of eight to 15 students. Assign one student in each group to be the group facilitator (i.e., switch roles with you). That student facilitates an online discussion for the group while you take the role of a student.

40. **Learner-Crafted Case Studies**
In groups of three to five, students develop a case study based on an instructor-given topic. The case study includes context and background information, characters, a time frame, description of the problem to be resolved, and a task to be completed or question to answer (see book for example). Each group posts their case study to the class forum and completes the case-study tasks of the other groups.

41. **Telling a Story**
In groups of five to seven, students create a group story that relates to the course content. The story should include a platform, catalyst, consequences, climax and resolution. Each group posts their story to the discussion board. Encourage students to review each others' stories.

42. **Resource Scavenger Hunt**
Identify important online resources for the course and develop questions based on the information that students can find there. Email students the list of questions and they email the answers back.

43. **Critical Incidents**
Identify three to five critical concepts in your course and create a critical incident question based on each (e.g., Can you describe an experience in the past when you have applied the Pythagorean Theorem in solving a problem on the job?). Create a discussion forum for each incident. Students respond to at least one question. Each post should contain background information, characters involved, time frame, and a clear description of the application of the course concept.

44. **Discussion Summaries**
Assign each student a course discussion to summarize. Students review the postings in their assigned discussion and compose a two- to three-paragraph summary. Students post their summaries to a designated discussion forum. Encourage students to review the summaries.

45. **Class Book**
Create a discussion forum for the class book. Students post what content they would like to see in the class book. Create a table of contents and post to the forum. Students submit any relevant material of theirs' that fits within the requested content of the book. Compile the material and make it available for students. Students vote on the material they would like to see in the book. Create a final version of the electronic book and attach it to the discussion board.

46. **Virtual Tours**
Using Web-sharing or screencasting software, take students on a synchronous tour of useful websites. You can also use a video of the tour and make the activity asynchronous.

Increasing Interactivity

47. **Collaborative Concept Maps**
Students individually post 10 key topics, themes, or issues from the course to a group discussion board. In groups of three to five, students review their group members' topics. Using those topics, each group creates a concept map based on the course. Each group posts their final concept map to a class forum.

48. **Group Blogs**
In groups of eight to 15, students keep a blog to reflect their thoughts, comments, etc. Each team posts one entry every other day. The entry can be written by any student in the group. At the end of the term, students reflect on their group's blog.

49. **Structured Controversies**
Select an issue that has two distinct sides. Create teams of two to four students, and assign each team to be for or against the issue. On the first day of the debate, the pro team posts a 1000-word statement that supports the issue. On the second day, the con team writes a 1000-word statement that opposes the issue and provides three to five questions for the pro team about their first-day statement. On the third day, the pro team responds to all of the con team's questions and provides three to five questions for the con team in 500 words. On the fourth day, the con team responds to the questions and provides another three to five for the pro team in 500 words. The pro team posts a 500-word closing statement on the 5th day and the con team posts their closing statement on the 6th.

50. **Presidential Debate**
Assign three to five students to be "candidates" for the debate. Students who are not playing the role of candidate submit one question to the instructor prior to the day of the debate that addresses the topic of the debate. Email the candidates a list of the questions. Hold the debate in a synchronous chat room. Ask the first candidate a question from the students. Clarify any inaccuracies and then ask the remaining questions, one-by-one.

51. **Online with Socrates**
Create questions that lead students to discuss and discover an important theme in the course, much like using the Socratic Method in a face-to-face discussion. Create groups of three to five students. The class meets in a synchronous chat room, and each group meets in a separate/concurrent chat room. Pose the first question in the class chat. Have each group discuss the question in their private chat for five minutes and post a response in the class chat. Continue this pattern until students have uncovered the theme/goal of the session.

52. **20 Questions**
Choose a relevant person or commonly used item that relates to the coursework. Teams of three to five students may email you a total of 20 questions with the goal of identifying their person/item. The questions must be answerable with the following responses: yes, no, irrelevant, probably, doubtful, sometimes, usually, rarely, or unknown. An answer of unknown does not count as one of the 20

questions. The group emails you when they think they have discovered who the person or what the item is.

53. **Guest Speaker Press Conference**
Invite a guest speaker to hold a "press conference" with your class in a synchronous discussion. The discussion is conducted similarly to a press conference. Students ask questions like they were reporters and write a newspaper article based on the press conference and post it to a discussion board.

54. **Online Jigsaw Learning**
Divide course content into several "chunks" and assign groups of students based on the number of chunks. Each student should have a chunk of information to cover. Assign each group a cased-based question that can be answered using information from all of the chunks. Each student prepares a summary of his or her chunk and posts it to the group's discussion board. Each group should collaboratively answer the question using the information from each chunk.

55. **Track Changes**
Assign a collaborative project that can be completed in Microsoft Word to groups of three to five students. Each group selects one student to write the rough draft of the project. Once the draft is completed, the student emails a copy of the project to one of the other group members. That member edits, comments, or makes changes using the Track Changes tool in Microsoft Word and emails the annotated project to the next student in the group. The next student does the same, but uses a different color for their changes. Once all of the group members have collaborated on the project, the final product (the draft and all of the changes) is emailed to the instructor.

56. **In the Hot Seat**
Assign a group of three to five students to be "in the hot seat" for one day. The students who are "in the hot seat" answer any students' questions on the readings for that day.

57. **Rotating Advisory Groups**
In groups of three to five, students participate in an advisory group for a pre-specified period of time. During that time period, the advisory group is responsible for making comments or recommendations about the class. The students in the advisory group should post their own comments or comments heard from students outside of the group to the advisory discussion forum.

58. **Point Counterpoint**
Create discussion forums based on a topic or issue. The issue does not have to be controversial, but it helps to create interest. The only requirement is that there are two sides to the issue. The first student can choose whether they agree or disagree with the topic. After that, each posting must convey the opposite viewpoint. End the activity when students can no longer counter the previous argument.

59. **Quick Polls and Surveys**
Using online survey software, poll students about course content, potentially confusing material, or any kind of course feedback that you desire.

60. **Meet an Expert**
Invite a guest speaker to join a synchronous chat with the students. Students read any required assignments and background information on the guest speaker before the activity begins. They prepare one question each for the speaker. Once in the chat room, introduce the speaker and students ask their questions in alphabetical order.

61. **Online Team Presentations**

In groups of three to five, students collaborate on a team presentation via a group discussion forum. Each team posts a 10-slide minimum PowerPoint presentation to the class forum with a list of their references. Encourage students to review their peers' presentations. Could be hosted on Google Sites or similar 3rd party applications.

62. **Answers²**
Students respond to a case-based question. In groups of two to four, students discuss their responses and come up with a collaborative response. Each group posts their response to the class discussion forum.

63. **Peer Quizzes**
Students create and post quiz questions to a discussion board and students the answers to their quiz questions in a separate forum. Encourage students to review the questions and corresponding answers.

64. **Team Peer Reviews**
Groups of three to five students complete a rough draft of a group project and post a copy to their discussion board. Teams pair up and provide peer reviews for each other. Teams post their review to the discussion board of the team they are reviewing. Each team uses the comments to revise their drafts and submit a final draft via their discussion board.

65. **Peer-Pair Feedback**
Choose an assignment that would benefit from peer review. Students pair up and provide feedback for each others' assignments. Students turn in the final draft with the peer review and two to three paragraphs describing the changes made based on the peer review.

66. **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**
Identify 10 to 20 of the most frequently asked questions in past sections of your course and post them to a discussion board. (You can make a separate post for each question so that each thread pertains to one question.) Students post a response that includes the source where they found the information. Close the thread when each question has been sufficiently answered. Provide a list of the questions and best answers at the end of the activity.

67. **Course S.W.O.T.s**
In groups of four, students will collaboratively identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to their success in the course. Each group will be assigned a different time throughout the semester to complete this task by posting their S.W.O.T. to the appropriate discussion board.

68. **Online Study Groups**
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.

69. **Quick Quizzes**
In a synchronous chat, students quickly answer questions (20-30) on course material. After asking each question, write down the students who answered correctly. Identify the student with the most correct answers.

70. **Round Robin**
Create a list of student emails that will serve as the round robin list. Choose a course-related topic and email the topic to the first student on the list. That student adds a fact/piece of information about the topic and emails it to the next person. Each student adds another piece of information to the list until it returns to the professor. Email everyone a copy of the round robin.

71. **Peer-Moderated Discussions**

Choose two to four course related topics and create a discussion forum for each. Assign a student moderator to each forum. Instruct the student on how to monitor a discussion. If there are problems in the discussion, contact the peer moderator.

72. **<u>Online Office Hours</u>**

Hold office hours in a synchronous chat room.

73. **<u>Digital Chain Letter</u>**

Create an email (chain letter) that includes an introduction, description of the activity, instructions for forwarding, and a list of students/email addresses in the group. Students add an introduction of themselves in the chain letter and forward it to the next student. The last student sends the final letter to you. Email everyone a copy so they can read everyone's introductions.

74. **<u>Regional Chats</u>**

Students participate in a 30-minute synchronous discussion with three to five students who live in the same time zone. Students discuss an assigned topic and one person from each group posts a summary to the class discussion board. Encourage students to review everyone's summaries.

75. **<u>Town Hall Meeting</u>**

Set a meeting time for a synchronous online discussion. Students prepare a question for the instructor and a possible follow-up prior to the discussion. Students ask their questions alphabetically.