



Why Are We Doing Active Learning?

Active learning is any teaching method that asks you to engage in a meaningful way in your learning process. Research shows that students don't feel like they learn much through active learning, even though they are! Students also tend to prefer passive techniques that require less effort, even though that leads to worse performance on assessments. Learning and cognitive growth is difficult and can be uncomfortable. You are trying to fit new information into your current ways of thinking. That effort and discomfort that you feel is literally learning happening!

Why Is My Instructor Using Active Learning?

- Active engagement is necessary for learning. The learning theory of constructivism states that learning happens when we actively build knowledge through inquiry, experience, questioning, and reflection. This allows you to create your own representations of new concepts and to adjust how you see the world based on new information and get back to a place of mental comfort.
- That challenging and uncomfortable place where learning occurs usually requires help! In active classes, your instructor isn't teaching less! They are giving you guidance and opportunity to work through the cognitive changes necessary for lasting learning and impact. That guidance, breaking down of challenging new tasks, and feedback is a crucial part of learning.
- Are they making you teach yourself? Sort of! But that is how learning works! Instructors can set up learning opportunities, but you have to put in the effort to try, practice, and work through the struggle of new skills and knowledge.
- Active learning may take the form of quizzes to show progress, peer-review activities and group work to learn from others, or authentic problem solving and creative tasks to enhance critical thinking skills, among many others!

What Does This Mean for Me?

- Work hard in class! Pay purposeful attention! Rote memorization is not effective over time. To have deep learning, you need reflective and deliberate practice. Your instructor can provide opportunity, but YOU must provide the intention and effort!
- Ask questions and engage in thinking about your learning process, including in class. Why are we being asked to do this? How can I do this with purpose?
- Engage in lectures! Taking notes by hand in your own words helps information retention and can be more meaningful for later review.
- Read and process assignment instructions and instructor feedback. This guidance is there to help you learn the new skill, meet expectations, and improve as you go.

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