



Not sure if you are ready to invest in *The Active Learning Revolution* and the 50+ included instructional strategies? No problem. Enjoy this free sample that includes three excerpts from the book.

This document includes:

1) Excerpt from Chapter Two: All About Active Learning

This excerpt includes information on the benefits of active learning, complete with support from contemporary research.

2) Excerpt from Chapter Six: Pinch Card Opportunities to Respond

The Active Learning Revolution explores a variety of whole-group opportunities to respond, including verbal, whiteboard, pinch card, and gestural response types. This excerpt features the *Emoji Strip*, a colorful and versatile pinch card that students love.

Note: Purchase of *The Active Learning Revolution* provides access to full color printable files of 6 pinch cards and many other tools & templates.

3) Excerpt from Chapter Ten: Cooperative Learning Opportunities

Check out *Trade, Trade, Chat*, a dynamic activity that will have students thinking, moving, and sharing. Use this as a review activity for any content or grade level, including professional development for adults.



Chapter Two

All About Active Learning

Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.

The origin of these words has been debated, with credit often given to Confucian philosopher Xunzi or American founding father Benjamin Franklin. What seems less debatable is the meaning of the statement: learning is not a spectator sport. We cannot simply tell students the information we want them to know and expect them to learn. Let's clear up a common misconception: talking does not equal teaching.

Active learning experiences offer excellent ways to keep students engaged. Active learning is an instructional approach that immerses students in academic content through meaningful learning opportunities (Freeman et al., 2014). The focus is on critical thinking, problem-solving, connecting ideas, and applying knowledge to real-world scenarios (Crane, 2016). Active learning moves away from traditional lecture-based instruction and favors interactive techniques such as discussions, collaborative tasks, whole-group responses, and hands-on activities. It fosters deep understanding and knowledge retention by encouraging learners to actively participate, engage with content, and collaborate with peers.

Active Learning vs. Passive Learning

We can identify active learning by observing student behaviors. Examples include participating in a think-pair-share activity, holding up a pinch card, talking in small groups, or writing short responses on individual whiteboards. Each of these examples offers

opportunities for students to interact directly with the content. In many cases, active learning also allows students to collaborate on tasks and learn from each other.

Passive learning, by contrast, typically involves students sitting at their desks and contributing little or nothing to a lesson. Examples include listening to a lecture, completing a worksheet, or watching a video. Lessons that rely on passive learning allow teachers to maintain more control and are often easier to design. However, they offer fewer opportunities for students to make personal connections to the material and learn from one another. When we rely too heavily on passive learning, we increase the likelihood that students will disengage and mentally check out of our lessons.

Active learning sounds much more fun and exciting than passive learning—but is it more effective? Do students actually learn more through active learning experiences? Do they improve their skills and demonstrate stronger academic achievement? A wealth of research answers with a resounding "yes." Multiple studies have found active learning models to be much more effective than passive learning models (Brame, 2016; Freeman et al., 2014; Prince, 2004). Yet, classroom instruction remains relatively passive. Let's dive deeper into why active learning works.

Benefits of Active Learning

Many educational researchers agree that active learning yields a range of benefits. When students are actively engaged, learning increases and disruptive behaviors decrease (Clarke et al., 2016; Fitzgerald Leahy et al., 2018; MacSuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015). Students are more likely to stay engaged during lessons (Allsop et al., 2020; Costello, 2017; Prince, 2004). They also benefit from improved critical thinking skills (Prince, 2004) and better knowledge retention (Baepler & Walker, 2014; Huda et al., 2016). Studies have noted higher academic achievement among students who engage in active learning (Costello, 2017; Stoltzfus & Libarkin, 2016). Prince (2004) also reported that students

enjoyed improved interpersonal skills after regularly participating in active learning experiences. With so many benefits, it will be helpful to dive deeper into a few.

Increased Engagement

Students show higher levels of engagement in classes that offer active learning opportunities. Contemporary research indicates that students are more motivated to learn when participating in active lessons (Clarke et al., 2016; Fitzgerald Leahy et al., 2018). This finding makes sense, as active learning immerses students in content by asking them to discuss ideas with peers, respond to a teacher's prompt, or complete a hands-on task. In contrast, passive learning relegates students to the role of observer, leaving them susceptible to daydreaming or disengaged behavior. Active learning strategies can motivate learners at much higher levels than traditional lecture-style lessons (Allsop et al., 2020). Once students are engaged, it is essential to maintain their focus and interest. At a minimum, we should introduce an active component every ten minutes during our lessons.

Improved Critical Thinking Skills

Many scholars recognize that active learning strategies enhance critical thinking skills (Nelson & Crow, 2014; Oros, 2007; Rossi et al., 2021). For instance, a study by Freeman et al. (2014) found that students who engaged in active learning showed significantly improved abilities to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information compared to those who experienced traditional lecture-based instruction. Oros (2007) highlighted the benefits of activities that encourage students to think through issues and discuss them with peers who hold opposing views. Students who experience active learning opportunities in the classroom are more likely to develop higher-order thinking skills essential for problem-solving and decision-making. Fitzgerald Leahy et al. (2018) observed that students gain a deeper understanding of complex concepts when active

learning lessons prompt them to articulate their thoughts and draw connections between ideas. It is difficult for students to practice critical thinking while passively listening to a lecture. Active learning lessons help foster critical thinkers.

Improved Interpersonal Skills

We have daily opportunities to help students practice vital interpersonal skills they will need throughout their lives. Interpersonal skills, which include communication, leadership, responsibility, flexibility, and teamwork, are essential for relating to and interacting with others (Acevedo & Lazar, 2022). Each of these skills can be practiced during active learning activities. Small group work, for instance, requires students to communicate effectively, listen actively, negotiate with peers, and resolve conflicts. Students regularly involved in active learning activities demonstrate enhanced communication skills, heightened empathy toward peers, and improved adaptability to diverse situations (Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Sesen & Tarhan, 2010). The great news is that we do not need to schedule separate lessons devoted solely to interpersonal skills. By offering regular opportunities for active learning, students naturally hone these skills along with the many other benefits already discussed.

SAMPLE ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGY #1

Pinch Card OTR # 3: Emoji Pinch Card



Our students have grown up in a world where emojis are used to communicate emotions in text messages, emails, and social media posts. This familiarity makes the Emoji Pinch Card a powerful tool for learners of all ages. The fun, colorful nature of the images grabs students' attention. Be sure to print your pinch cards in full color.

You can use the Emoji Pinch Card with any content. The example above shows a strip with six emojis representing love, cool, laughter, surprise, sadness, and anger. These emojis were selected to mimic familiar icons learners might encounter on social media platforms. Feel free to create new pinch cards tailored to your specific needs; you might choose different icons or adjust the number of emojis on your cards.

The Emoji Pinch Card works well with prompts that ask learners to express feelings or opinions. Well-crafted questions can reveal a great deal about our students. We can ask how they feel about a particular topic before teaching a lesson and revisit their feelings afterward. We can also ask students to share how they feel about a specific lesson or their learning progress. Their responses provide valuable formative data that can help guide and adjust our instruction.

Be mindful of the specific emojis you include on your pinch cards. If a possible response could cause unnecessary controversy or hurt feelings, avoid it. For example, if you're asking students to share their feelings about a lesson you worked hard on, and it would upset you to see an anger emoji selected, consider leaving that emoji off the card.

Remember, there are no wrong responses when students are asked to share their feelings. It's great when they express positive emotions, but we must validate all responses. The follow-up ideas in Table 6.3 can help students elaborate on their initial pinch card reactions.

Table 6.3

Sample Prompts with Potential Follow-up Opportunities for the Emoji Pinch Card

Sample Prompts	Follow-Up Opportunities
How do you feel after reading the first three chapters of the story?	Use whiteboards to elaborate.
How do you think the main character of the story feels?	Turn to a partner and discuss your initial responses.
What is your opinion of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution?	Discuss/debate in small groups, then revisit the question to see if anyone's response changed.
How would you feel if we had a pop quiz today on multiplication facts?	Complete an exit ticket (Ch. 13) detailing why you are or are not ready for the quiz.
What do you think about the interactive group project we worked on today?	Tally the number of responses for each emoji and, in small groups, create graphs to display the data.

Another great use of the Emoji Pinch Card is prompting students to express their feelings about peer work. If a student presents a project to the class, peers can provide feedback using the pinch card. Similarly, you might ask for Emoji Pinch Card responses after a classmate contributes an original thought or idea during a discussion. Once your class has used the pinch card for a while, you may find that some students begin using it without being prompted—perhaps to show appreciation for something a classmate says. Be sure to encourage these spontaneous responses.

SAMPLE ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGY #2

Cooperative Activity # 4: Trade, Trade, Chat

Trade, Trade, Chat allows students to discuss various topics with multiple partners. The teacher selects several content-related words or phrases in advance, and each student is randomly given one to discuss with a peer. This activity fosters engagement through movement and social interaction. Its simple format can accommodate any academic content. Students have multiple opportunities to share ideas with—and learn from—their classmates.

Environment

This activity can be completed in any classroom.

Time

The exact amount of time depends on the number of rounds you wish to offer your students. Plan for approximately 3 minutes per round.

Materials

- pre-printed cards with a variety of content-specific words (as seen in Figure 10.2)
- music

Figure 10.2. Sample Trade, Trade, Chat Cards for a Solar System Lesson



Procedure

- 1) Each student begins with a card that has a word or phrase related to the unit of study (e.g., Solar System terms).
- 2) As the teacher plays music, students walk around the room, quickly exchanging cards with classmates as they pass.
- 3) When the music stops, students pair up with the closest classmate and discuss the terms on their cards for 2-3 minutes.
- 4) The teacher restarts the music to begin another round of Trade-Trade-Chat.

Suggestions

- Play upbeat/happy music as the students move around the room.
- When students pair up, they will each have a card. You can let the students pick which word/phrase they will discuss or challenge them to incorporate both into their conversation.
- Create a template for your cards using Microsoft Word or Google Docs. Then, you can update the words/phrases and print new cards for each new unit.
- For added durability, print on cardstock.

Sample topics

- Synonyms: Each card has a word. Students brainstorm adjectives for their words.
- Literature: Cards have character names from a book. Students talk about character traits.
- Shapes: Print cards with shapes on them. Students discuss real-world examples of the shapes.
- Order of Operations: Each card has a math problem. Students work together to solve it.
- Ecosystems: List ecosystems on the cards. Students name organisms that live in their ecosystem.

- Governments: Cards list types of government. Pairs of students compare them.
- Geography: Print the names of geographical features. Students define the feature and name real-world examples.
- Foreign Language: Each card includes a vocabulary word. Students use the words in sentences.