

Fall 2004

[[Home](#)] [[Up](#)] [[Innovation Abstracts](#)] [[Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education](#)]
[[GRCC Guidelines For Writing A Course Syllabus](#)] [[Support for Course Development](#)]
[[eGRCC GRADE INPUT REMINDERS](#)] [[75 Things You Can Do To Enhance Your Classroom](#)]
[[Ten Techniques for Energizing Your Classroom Discussions](#)] [[Martin Luther King](#)]
[[Tactical and Structural Recommendations for College Course Design](#)] [[First Day Icebreakers](#)]

TECHNIQUE # 1 TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOR

This is the easiest structure to implement. A problem or question is posed; students turn to a classmate sitting next to them to discuss their answer. Give your students a specified amount of time to discuss (30 seconds).

This method gives students only a brief amount of time to discuss a particular answer or idea. Use this when a problem or question has a simple answer and you want your students to provide a quick response. The purpose is to give every student a chance to respond and to become used to responding to questions or problems.

In a pair, one student may dominate the discussion. You may have to prompt students to allow both to have time to discuss. You may feel that allowing students to discuss in pairs may seem to disrupt the flow of the lesson. However, the more you do it the less distracting it will become.

TECHNIQUE # 2 THINK-PAIR-SHARE

This technique is similar to Turn To Your Neighbor. After the teacher poses a problem or question, students think alone about the question for a specified amount of time (30 seconds). Students then form pairs to discuss the problem or question. The time can vary depending on the question and how the discussion is going within the pairs. In a final step, individuals share their thoughts with the entire class. At the beginning of a semester you may not want to call on students to respond, only those willing to share.

The intention of this technique is to foster short class discussion. Pairs share what they have discussed with the entire class. Other students can then respond to what is said or they can share what they discussed with their own partners.

Initially, students may be reluctant to share their answers with the whole class. It may be necessary to use this technique several times before they are comfortable with it. You can foster more participation by letting students know that they can share what they said or what their partner said.

TECHNIQUE # 3 THINK-PAIR-SQUARE-SHARED

This technique is similar to Think-Pair-Share. A step is added before students share with the class. Have student pairs turn to another pair and discuss what they have shared within their first pairs. Then have the pairs share with the class.

This technique fosters short discussions. The discussion will lead into a discussion with the entire class as pairs volunteer to share or are randomly called upon to share.

It is important for the teacher to make sure that pairs are matched up with other pairs, and that pairs have equal participation and that constructive sharing takes place. If

you are concerned about a pair dominating the conversation, give each pair a specified amount of time to share their answer. Remind the pairs that they do not have to accept the other pair's response, but they do have to show respect for the pair.

TECHNIQUE # 4 ROUND ROBIN

This technique works best if students are in groups (3-5 students). Pose a problem or question and have the students go around the circle quickly sharing their ideas or answers. This technique is a good one to use to elicit quick responses from students. Allow the students to offer answers until you tell them to stop. Give the students one opportunity to pass on answering.

At the end have the group share their answers and ideas with the class. You can randomly call on individuals to share and allow the others in the group to clarify what was said.

This technique is great for brain-storming discussions. The purpose is for students to generate as many answers or ideas as possible in a given amount of time.

After asking a question or posing a problem, the teacher monitors the students to determine if equal participation is taking place. The teacher also monitors to see that students do not criticize answers or ideas that are given. Critique of answers or ideas could follow if the teacher wanted to extend the technique.

The greatest challenge is making sure that every student is involved in the sharing and that answers and ideas are not criticized while the technique is in process. Getting students into groups also can be a slight challenge. If you first have students work in pairs using the other techniques, then they will be better prepared for this technique.

TECHNIQUE #5 LINE-UPS

This technique requires more time than Turn-to-Your-Neighbor, Think-Pair-Share, Think-Pair-Share-Square. Students line up to some criterion, such as height, birthdays or alphabetical order. The teacher poses a question or problem. At this point have the line "fold"—that is, the ends move together to form two lines facing each other (if you have an uneven number of students then three students can discuss together). If you had your students lining up by height the tallest person would be talking to the shortest person. Students then discuss with the person in front of them. The discussion can go on as long as you feel it is productive. You can then have volunteers share with the entire class or you can randomly call on students.

This technique can foster great discussions. It allows students to move out of their seats and forces them to talk with a variety of students.

You will need to make sure you have enough room to have your students form a line and then fold the line. Monitoring for equal participation is important as well.

The first time you use this technique allow your students enough time to form a line and then fold the line. As with the other techniques, it can also be a challenge getting equal participation.

TECHNIQUE #6 VALUE LINES

This technique takes the longest to conduct. It is used when you want students to take a stance on an issue. The instructor reads a statement and then each student stands on one side or the other of an imaginary line. One side of the line is for those agreeing with the statement and the other side is for those disagreeing with it. Then have the students Turn-to-Their-Neighbor (on their side of the line) to discuss why they agreed or disagreed with the statement. Then each pair

turns to another pair across the line and discusses why they believe the way they do. You can randomly call on an individual to share with the class. Students can also share what they heard from individuals with different opinions from theirs.

This technique can lead to lengthy, involved, and often hotly debated discussions. Students have the opportunity to move out of their seats and are exposed to a variety of different opinions.

It is important to make sure that you have room for the imaginary line. You may also need to facilitate the discussion when pairs with opposing opinions face off.

The greatest challenge is monitoring how students interact with other students having the opposite opinion. Students need to discuss rather than argue. Another challenge is finding interesting topics that will bring about opposing opinions.

TECHNIQUE #7: JIGSAW

Refers to dividing up the work or materials so that each group member does a part. No one has everything that is needed to complete the task. Each student has a portion of some set of needed information. In research students could be assigned a part of a famous person's life, an aspect of war, or the events leading to a discovery. Jigsawing can also be used to divide an assignment so that each group member does a part. The group can then split and find other class members who are going to research the same topic. After they have acquired information, they go back to their "home" group, and provide them with the details that have learned. No one has the complete piece of information, so this strategy builds interdependency. Group members need each other to obtain the full experience.

TECHNIQUE #8: SHARING LIMITED RESOURCES

Sharing limited resources is another way to create positive interdependence. Giving one paper/book/quiz/poster/markers/assignment/ to a group helps draw group members together to complete an assignment. Limiting resources is important not only in light of budget constraints but is also the best way to increase the chances that cooperation will occur within the group.

TECHNIQUE #9: QUESTION AND ANSWER PAIRS

Question and answer pairs alternate asking and answering questions on assigned reading or as a great review activity before a test. Students are seated in a large circle. They number off 1 – 2 – 1- 2 etc... The "1's" are told that they will not be moving. The "2's" are told that they will be moving throughout the activity. The questions that can be asked may be the end of chapter review questions, or something more developed like a fun worksheet that asks a series of questions pertinent to your curriculum. A 1 & 2 person pair up, and try to decide what the best answer for the question is. Instructors need to gauge the amount of time before the "2's" are told to move to their left, and meet the next 1. They then answer the next question on the review sheet. This continues as the 2's circle around the room until they are back at their own original seat. Students should be encouraged to place a check/asterisk by any questions that they are sure of. Those that they do not feel confident on, they can revisit on their own studies. The students receive the benefit of being able to talk to each other one on one, but also to meet half of the class this way. It works!

TECHNIQUE #10: ADVANCED PREPARATION PAIRS

Students are to write a short analysis paper summarizing the vents/relevancy/opinion of an assigned reading for class. Students bring copies of the paper to the class. The members of their base group or discussion pair will listen to the team member read the paper, then edit, and evaluate the paper. Criteria for review can be predetermined by instructor, class, or peer group. Each group can select the "outstanding" paper as they deem it, then in large group it can be discussed as to why it stood out from the others.