

Teaching for Learning in Large Classes



1. Invite a few students to stand and introduce themselves at the beginning of each class period. [Name, hometown, major or career goal, something unusual –like “At home, I have a cat named ‘Glass’.”]
2. Help Peer Instructors distribute handouts.
3. Ask students to form pairs [trios or quartets]. Then, give the groups one of the following instructions:
 - A. “In the next three minutes, in your group, summarize the main point or concept I’ve just covered.”
 - B. “What connections have you found between the material I’ve just covered and topics discussed previously? You have four minutes for this activity.”
 - C. “See if your group can discover direct or indirect links between this material and our lives today. Five minutes for this activity.”
[Obviously, there are many variations of #3. Also, if you can’t find time during the lecture session to ask a few groups to share insights with the entire class, start the next section discussion with a few reports.]
4. Arrive early to chat with students as they enter the lecture hall.
5. Occasionally, ask students to stand, shake hands, and introduce themselves to three or four people nearby-even if they already know each other.
6. Change student seating periodically.
7. Avoid using the lectern whenever possible.
8. Lecture from different locations in the hall [including the aisles].
9. Learn at least a few names of students not in your section. Occasionally, punctuate your lecture with a student name while making eye contact with him/her. Examples:
 - A. “Sarah, in your next section meeting, you may want to take the lead in sharing your viewpoint about X with your section friends.”
 - B. “Am I making any sense? I’d like Charles to let me know after class or by email if he thinks I need to clarify anything the next time we meet.”
10. Include five to seven minute writing assignments in class. Example:
 - A. “In the next seven minutes, construct an argument designed to convince Socrates that he should take the offer to escape prison.”
 - B. As a follow-up assignment, ask students to write a short critique of their own argument as basis for discussion in their section.