Carnegie Mellon University
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Eberly Center
Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation

Identify Appropriate Instructional Strategies

After selecting the learning objectives and assessments for the course, we need to think about the various instructional activities we will use to engage students with the material and enable them to meet the objectives. Of course, the key is to align instructional strategies with the other two components. Many instructional strategies are flexible, and can be used in service of several learning objectives, but some of them are better suited for a particular set of objectives. In most cases, we will need to use a combination of instructional strategies. This table focuses on two of three components of course design.

Instructional Strategy	Suitable Objectives
Lectures	Transmit information which supplements or enhances reading; promote understanding via explanations; respond to student misconceptions or difficulties; create or engage interest in a new area; motivate reading or other assignments
Discussions	Practice thinking and communicating in the subject/discipline; evaluate positions, arguments, or designs; defend own position; identify problems, conflicts and inconsistencies; get feedback from/about students; draw on students' expertise and prior knowledge
Case studies	Actively involve students in learning; apply disciplinary methods of analysis; practice problem solving; practice high-level cognitive skills (i.e., application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation); think critically; blend cognitive and affective dimensions (if the case has ethical or controversial dimensions); develop collaborative skills; relate knowledge to real world; formulate arguments and counterarguments
Writing	Develop systematic relationships among ideas; application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation; reflect on own thinking; record the evolution of own thinking; practice disciplinary conventions (e.g., APA style); practice responding to feedback and revising
Labs/Studios	Develop disciplinary and process skills; obtain immediate feedback and respond to it; develop metacognitive skills (e.g., awareness of own strategies); evaluate results or product of own work; approximate real life situations
Group Projects	Compare and contrast perspectives; practice high-level cognitive skills (i.e., application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation); develop meta-skills such as leadership, communication, conflict resolution; strategize and plan how to tackle complex problems and distribute work
Recitations	Practice problem solving; review material; check student understanding; identify and correct misconceptions; individualize instruction; answer questions
Public Reviews	Evaluation; practice giving constructive feedback; self-reflection; defend vision for own work
Service-Learning	Sometimes called community-based instruction, service-learning places equal emphasis on the service component of the experience and the learning outcomes for the student
Independent Student Projects	Explore areas of interest in depth; conceive of, plan, and execute a research or creative project from beginning to end; work independently; seek mentorship from an expert in the field.

This site supplements our 1-on-1 teaching consultations.
CONTACT US to talk with an Eberly colleague in person!