

# The Trainers' Survival Guide

25 Activities to Make Lecture-Based Programs Active

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## 25 Activities to Make Lecture-Based Programs Active

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The average adult can sit and just listen for about twenty minutes. After that, any lecture tends to lose its punch. What's an instructor to do? Talk faster? Simply hit the highlights? No, of course not. By building active learning techniques into the structure of the class, any instructor can improve his or her class.

Following are 25 ways to engage participants in a lecture-based program or lecture module in a training seminar.



1. **Question for Another Group** – In this activity, participants are divided into groups of 4 to 7 people. Together, they develop between 1 and 3 questions for another group to answer based on presented material. Once all of the questions are written, they are switched among groups and then answered.
2. **How to Use this at Work** – In groups of 2 to 7 people, have participants list ways that they will use the presented material back at work. If the group cannot come up with any application, you can throw their problem out to the whole group. If nothing develops, move on. Be aware of the anomaly, however. If this happens repeatedly, it may indicate the course is not appropriate for the audience.
3. **Case Studies** – Divide the class into groups of 2 to 7 people. Have them answer between 1 and 3 case studies prepared by you, based on the material covered. This often works best if you tell them where in the workbook/book they can start looking to find/confirm the answers.
4. **Stump the Trainer** – Either in groups or individually, have the participants develop questions based on material presented for you to answer. They may either be basic or more complex. This activity will give you a good idea of how much detail and the level of difficulty they can handle.

5. **Turn to Your Neighbor** – When a portion of your lecture has ended, have participants turn to each other and discuss the two or three main points learned. This works best if you have them write down their answers. Most people will write when you tell them to. Writing the answers will keep them focused on the task of learning.
6. **Quick Quiz** – After a portion of your lecture has ended, pass out a short quiz of no more than 5 or 6 questions based on covered materials. Have participants answer the questions, and then go over them. For maximum interaction, you can then have them work in groups for a group answer before reviewing the answers yourself.

7. **Fill in the Blank** – This technique is a good one to use while you are lecturing. Simply leave blanks in your workbook or pass out worksheets with blanks for participants to fill in as you lecture. Most people don't like to have empty spaces on their pages, so they will fill in the blanks with the information you provide.



8. **Crossword Quiz** – After a lecture segment, hand out a crossword puzzle quiz to each participant. Wait an appropriate amount of time for participants to complete the puzzle. The amount of time allowed will vary depending on the group's education level and complexity of the puzzle. Consider giving a prize for the first correctly completed puzzle. To ensure participation or if you have a mixed group, you may want to have participants complete this activity in groups or pairs.

You can find worksheet generators, fill in the blank, etc., at <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/worksheetsgenerator/index.html>  
<http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com>

9. **Find the Question | Find the Answer** – In this activity, you give each participant either a question or its corresponding answer on an index card. Hand them out randomly. Next, instruct participants to stand up, move around, and find the person holding the matching question or answer.
10. **You Read It. You Teach It** – To add variety to your lecture modules, divide your participants in groups of 3 to 5 people. Pass out 2 to 3 pages of information to each. Allow between 12 to 20 minutes for groups to prepare their “mini lectures” on the material. Finally, let each group present the material. You can then add in any needed information. This works well with non-technical topics.

11. **Put It Together** – When teaching a process, hand out index cards with a step of the process to each participant. Next, ask the participants to get themselves in order from beginning to end. Once they are in line, review each step of the process and make any adjustments that are needed. If the group is large, use a piece of cardstock with a keyword printed on the front and select a small number of people to complete the exercise in front of everyone else. The cardstock with the keyword will help those in the audience to stay involved in the process.
12. **Four Questions** – Post four flipcharts around the room, each with a different question. Divide your class into four groups. Instruct each group to stand next to one of the flipcharts. Next, give each a different colored marker and five minutes to answer their question. When the time is up, the groups rotate to the next question and add any additional information to the next chart with their colored marker. This activity will provide a physical pattern interruption and cut down on duplicate answers.
13. **What I Find Most Difficult** – This exercise is similar to **Four Questions**; however, instead of posting questions on the flipcharts, you list topics covered in your lecture. You then instruct participants to go stand next to the chart that lists the topic they find most difficult. Once at the appropriate chart, ask the participants to write down what is particularly difficult. When they are done, instruct them to sit down. Then go through each chart clarifying and reviewing areas of difficulty. This activity has the added benefit of telling you where your teaching is effective and where roadblocks are popping up.
14. **Demonstrate and Graduate** – A picture is worth a thousand words. A demonstration or a video is a worth a million. To illustrate your points, consider adding a demonstration or video segment where appropriate. Allow participants to take part in the demonstration. At the very least, have them answer questions about the demonstration or video seen.
15. **Most | Least Useful** – List six to seven uses for the information you have provided during your lecture on separate pieces of flipchart paper. Hang them around the room. Next, ask participants to stand next to the use they think is most applicable to them. Have them list why that is on the paper. Review the responses. Then, have them choose the use that is least applicable to them and repeat the exercise. During the second part, you can clarify misconceptions or gaps in learning regarding why a fact or application might be valuable.

16. **Best Summary** – Divide participants into groups of 4 to 7 people. Pass out an index card to each group. Have them summarize the information you shared during your lecture on the card. Review each of the summaries when all groups are done. Write out a composite on a whiteboard, flipchart sheet, or overhead projector transparency and have the class copy it down in their notes. When using a workbook, leave space for this information.

17. **Pretest** – Before the lecture begins, pass out a pretest to each participant. Have them answer the questions to the best of their ability. Next, begin your lecture highlighting the correct answer to each of the questions as you go.



18. **Jeopardy** – Most people like playing in this game show format. Divide your group into teams and have them create questions to the answers displayed on the wall/screen. To create the game, list the amounts on cardstock (e.g. \$200, \$400, \$800, \$1000) and the categories above those amounts. You will need 5 of each amount if you have 5 categories. Write the question (the answer) upside down on the reverse side of each card. Tape each card on the wall in the grid format. When a group provides a correct question, give them the card. At the end, total up all cards to determine the winner. If you have a projector on your computer, you can create the game with a PowerPoint template available from the site below. The second website also has templates for versions of *Millionaire*, *Concentration*, and more.

<http://www.pathoslearning.com/gameshow.html>

<http://208.183.128.3/tutorials/PPT-games/>

19. **What It Is | Why It's Good | What Could Go Wrong** – Divide your group into three teams. Have the first prepare a list of the key points you presented. Have the second create a list of ways in which they could use what you have presented. Have the third list what could happen if they don't use what you have discussed.

20. **Best Answer** – Divide your group into 3 to 5 teams. Give each group a paper bag and a stack of single-colored index cards. Each group should have its own color. Have each develop a question for the other teams to answer and write that question on the outside of the bag. When all questions are ready, rotate the questions so that each group has one that it did not write. Next, each group should answer the

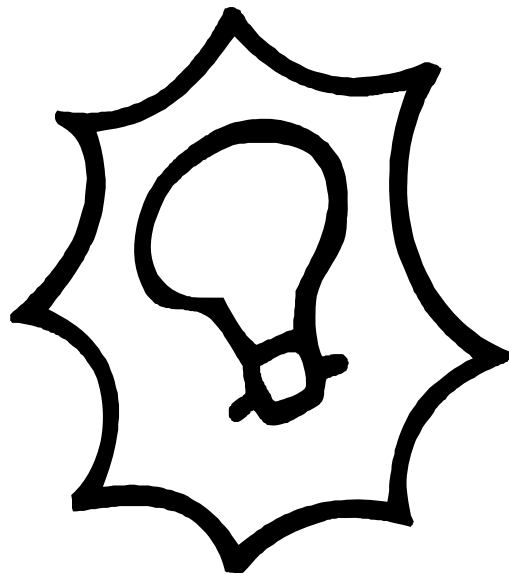
question held on a colored index card. When done, the card should be placed in the bag and sent to the next group. After everyone has seen every question, the bags should return to their original authors. At this point, the groups should open the bags and evaluate the answers to their question. A total of ten points should be divided between the answers, more points going toward the better answers. Next, review all questions and answers. To wrap up the activity, total the number of points given to each group (e.g. the green card group got 12, the pink card group got 6, etc.). The group with the most points wins.

21. **BINGO** – Use this activity during your lecture. List terms you are discussing on a BINGO card for each of the participants listening to your lecture. Once a participant gets a row, two rows, or whatever criterion you set, the game is over. For an online BINGO card creator, see the website below.

[http://www.bestteachersites.com/web\\_tools/materials/bingo/](http://www.bestteachersites.com/web_tools/materials/bingo/)

22. **Practice Case (Role Play)** – Just don't call them role plays! Nobody seems to like role plays, but practice cases are okay. Role plays can work if they are done well. Often what works best is for a group to prepare for one of the parts and then to elect a representative to play that part in front of others. This reduces the risk and improves the participant's potential for success because many people were involved in preparing for the exercise. It also decreases the likelihood that someone ended up doing a "role play" when they really didn't want to.

23. **Two Truths and a Lie** – Divide your group into teams of 3 to 7 members. Have them develop and record on flipchart paper three statements about the material covered. Two should be true and the other false. Go around the room and have each group read its statements out loud. The other groups should identify on paper which statements are true and which are false. Review the answers when all statements have been presented.



24. **Both Sides of the Issue** – Post flipchart paper around the room with a large “T” covering most of the page. Leave room to write on the top of the “T.” List a topic on the top of each “T” and a question about the topic on each side of the page, directly underneath the main topic. For instance, a “T” on a lecture about presentation skills might have the words “Presentation Skills” on top of the “T,” “What makes a good presentation on the left side?” and “What makes a bad presentation on the right?” Divide your group into teams of 3 to 7 members. Have each team answer the chart questions and then report back to the group.
25. **Crumpled Question Toss** – This exercise works well if you are reviewing a lot of material. Give participants a piece of paper and have them each write a question about what has been discussed. Next, have them crumple the paper into a ball and throw in (gently) at another participant. Then have them open the question and record an answer. When all questions have been answered, re-crumple and throw. In this round have the participants add any needed information to the answer given. Crumple and throw one more time. When the pages are opened, give each person an opportunity to read the questions and answers and add any comments they might have. To keep control of the room and to stay on task, ask for additional responses to any duplicate questions after each question is read. You can vary this exercise by beginning with prewritten questions on each page.

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## Your Issues | Your Location | Our Experts

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